



FAITH  
PALMER  
IN  
NEW YORK  
LAZELLE T WOOLLEY





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“WHY DIDN’T YOU LET ME KNOW?”



# FAITH PALMER IN NEW YORK

BY

LAZELLE THAYER WOOLLEY

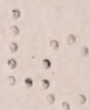
Author of

"Faith Palmer at the Oaks"

"Faith Palmer at Fordyce Hall"



Illustrated by Paula B. Himmelsbach



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## Introduction

IN this, the third book of the Faith Palmer Series, the scene again changes, and Faith is found among new surroundings, and, in a measure, among new friends. Betty and Kathryn and other close associates in the former books still remain companions, however, and take conspicuous parts in a story that moves rapidly.

The first book of the series, "Faith Palmer at The Oaks," told how Faith came from California, an orphan, to live with her two old grandaunts in their New England home. They had lived alone so many years that at first they hadn't wanted her, but she soon found a way into their affections. She had some lively adventures, and, at the close of the story, was getting ready to enter Fordyce Hall, a boarding-school on the banks of the Hudson River.



The second book was "Faith Palmer at Fordyce Hall." It took Faith through part of a year, during which some stirring things happened.

In both these books Faith developed in character and ability, yet retained her simplicity and sunny temperament. Rather oddly, the grandaunts developed, too, and finally, in the present book, they come down to New York with Faith for the winter.

Here in the metropolis are phases of life not seen anywhere else in America. This book is the story of Faith's life on the eleventh floor.



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Faith Palmer in New York.







# Faith Palmer in New York

## CHAPTER I

### IN TIGHT QUARTERS

A YELLOW taxicab stopped in front of a huge apartment-house on Seventy-ninth Street, not far from Broadway. Night had just set in, together with a driving rain that beat unmercifully upon the umbrellas bobbing along the sidewalks. Umbrellas, indeed, were of small use in the gale that howled up the street—a raw, chilling tempest that went through to the marrow. It was only September, but New York shivered and crept dismally home.

Dismounting from the driving-seat, the chauffeur of the taxicab opened the door of the passenger compartment. From it emerged a head, which withdrew when the wind and



the rain struck it. Then it emerged again, this time with more aggressive force. The head had a voice.

“Mercy!” it said.

“Come on, miss,” advised the chauffeur. “I’ll hold this rubber blanket over you, and you can make a run for shelter. You’ll get soaked standing there.”

“Oh, I don’t mind it myself, you know—I rather like it!” said the voice, which was rather girlish and pleasantly modulated. “I always like the rain! I don’t mind getting wet, but both my aunts have the rheumatism dreadfully!”

Then the head came further out, followed by the entire figure of a young lady rather small in stature and attired in a blue street suit of excellent cut and fit. For a minute she stood there, the rain pelting her.

“You see,” she went on, “we packed our raincoats in the trunks. That’s what people always do just before it rains! Here, let me take that rubber robe, please! I’ll bundle up



my aunts, one at a time, and get them into the house as fast as I can. There! Now careful, Aunt Abigail—don't slip! Oh, we've got you! Don't hurry too much, auntie; it's only a few steps. See—here we are!”

Having escorted a tall and rather feeble old lady to the vestibule of the apartment-house, the girl and the chauffeur returned to the automobile for the other, who proved to be rather plump and unwieldy, and feeble as well. The old aunts were really grand-aunts.

“Lean on me, Aunt Debby,” said the girl, solicitously, but with a twinkle in her brown eyes. “Lean on me—you know I'm stronger than I look.”

The rain continued to pelt, but at last the three of them were out of it and the taxi driver paid and dismissed. Before going, he had set some hand-baggage into the elevator for them.

“Third floor,” said the girl, as she gently shoved and elbowed her two charges into the



car. "We have come to occupy Apartment 310, you know. Only please don't jerk the elevator—my aunts are not used to it."

"Yes, ma'am," returned the elevator boy, banging the door shut and giving his lever a turn. "That's the furnished apartment on the inside. Mr. Tookey's folks lived there; they've gone to Florida for the winter. But they left their maid for you, all right. She's been looking for you—I guess you're the Palmers!"

"Yes, we're the Palmers. Can you help us with these satchels when we get out? The trunks will be along later, I suppose. Mercy! I wonder if everything will be soaked. I hope it doesn't rain like this often in New York. Why, it has rained ——"

"Third floor," announced the boy, bringing his car to a stop with a suddenness that almost caused Aunt Debby to sit down in a heap. Then he slid open the door, seized the satchels, and followed his passengers into the corridor.



"I'll show you the way," he said, patronizingly; "come along."

The old ladies had been almost speechless up to this point, having all they could do to mind their steps and follow their eyes; but now the taller and slimmer of the two found her voice.

"Faith," she observed, as she looked up and down the dimly-lighted hall, "there is too much marble here, and not enough light and air. I am afraid we shall find it exceedingly gloomy."

"But this is only the corridor!" Faith remonstrated. "I am sure we'll find the apartment real cheerful. It does seem a little gloomy out here in the hall; but I suppose they can't help that in New York. Do be careful, Aunt Debby, not to slip on this tile—there! have you hurt yourself?"

Aunt Debby, the plump one, had just been saved from falling by the elevator boy, who dropped his satchels and caught her. He was a stalwart youth of sixteen.



"I am thankful that we have no such floor as this at home," ejaculated the old lady, getting her balance again and moving gingerly. "For my part, I prefer carpets to stone."

"And kerosene to these miserable electric lights," commented the other aunt. "Our parlor lamp gives more light than all of them put together."

"They are small candle-power here in the hall, ma'am," explained the boy, in grieved tones. "But I guess you'll find 'em bright enough inside. The Tookeys had some big patent bulbs put in not long ago."

"Is the apartment very light—in the daytime, I mean?" inquired Faith, as she piloted the old ladies around a turn in the hallway.

The boy's face was dubious for a moment.

"Oh, I guess it's light enough," he answered, with a laugh. "Anyhow, it's as light as most New York apartments. Of course, it's on the inside."

"On the inside of what?" asked Aunt Abigail.



"The inside of the building, ma'am," he returned.

"You are a saucy boy!" said the old lady, negotiating the slippery floor with caution. "I did not suppose it was on the roof!"

"He didn't mean to be saucy," assured Faith, rather hurriedly. "I suppose he means that our apartment is on the side away from the street. We knew that before—didn't Mr. Tookey write us about it? But he did say that it was a beautiful, cozy apartment, so I'm sure we'll find it all right."

"I am not so sure!" sniffed Aunt Abigail. The boy regarded her with some curiosity.

"I shall be very glad if I find it at all," remarked Aunt Debby, again getting her balance after a misstep.

They came at length to the far end of the corridor and saw before them a mahogany-stained door, with massive hardware, bearing the numbers, "310." The elevator boy put his finger to the door-button, and in a few sec-



onds the call was answered by a maid in cap and apron. When she saw them, her homely but rather agreeable face expanded laterally. She threw the door wide open.

“We are the Palmers,” Faith proclaimed.

“Yes, miss—sure I know it.” The maid had a most curious foreign accent and a voice oddly full and deep. “Yes, miss; ain’t I been lookin’ for you many whiles? Come in—did you was wet?”

The boy dropped his satchels and laughed impolitely; but Faith silenced him with a coin and excused him.

“We’re not very wet,” she said, when he was gone. “But we’re hungry—at any rate, I am! And we’re just dying to see the apartment! You know we rented it from the Tookeys without ever seeing it. We’re just going to spend the winter in New York, you know, and—and I do hope it’s all right! Mr. Tookey said it was, and Mrs. Tookey wrote that it was just as cute as could be.”

“Go in, child!” said Aunt Abigail, rather



impatiently. "Girl"—addressing the maid—"take the satchels out of the way."

"Yes, mum." The servant bestowed a keen glance at the stately old lady. "Yes, mum; my name's Ann, mum."

She picked up the hand-baggage and they followed her into the apartment. Confronting them was a very narrow hall, reaching back straight and uncompromising into dimness. It was lighted by a single electric bulb.

"The living-room is in there," said Ann, indicating a doorway off this hall. "Wait a minute—I'll make the light on."

Evidently this light was one to which the elevator boy had referred. It was, indeed, bright. But the room it revealed was scarcely bigger than Faith's clothes-closet up at Chester, where she lived with her aunts. Against a window stood a parlor table, while nearly all of the remaining space was occupied by a divan, two easy chairs, an upright piano and a magazine rack. The three travelers



stood crowded together at the entrance, surveying it.

"What room is this?" asked Aunt Abigail, supposing she had heard incorrectly.

"The living-room, mum."

"The living-room!" said the two aunts, in unison.

"Yes, mum," said Ann.

Faith and her aunts regarded it in silence for a full minute. Then Aunt Abigail spoke:

"We cannot live here. Let us see the rest of the apartment."

Ann, having disposed of the baggage somehow or other, conducted her new employers down the hall again. Turning in at another door she switched on a second flaring electric light.

"Dinin'-room, mum."

This was longer than the living-room, but not so wide. The sideboard and serving-table were placed side by side in order to leave space between the windows for a china cabinet. The dining-table occupied fully half the room.



When the six chairs were placed at this table only a slim person could pass behind them. Ann was slim. In one corner were crowded a sewing-machine and a tea cart.

"We will see the kitchen," said Aunt Abigail, solemnly. Aunt Debby had lost her tongue, and Faith's face was serious, with the corners of her mouth drooping.

The servant conducted them, single file, through a sort of box that represented the butler's pantry; but they couldn't all get into the kitchen together with comfort. It was very modern and clean, but up at Chester the pantry itself was wide and lofty beside it.

"Mrs. Tookey called it the kitchenette, mum," volunteered Ann.

"Lord help us!" muttered Aunt Abigail. "Are there bedrooms?"

When they saw these, the two old ladies sat down, and Aunt Debby wiped her eyes. Aunt Abigail's face was hard and cold. There were, indeed, three bedrooms besides Ann's sleeping quarters; but Aunt Debby couldn't



get into hers at all without crawling over the foot of the bed, and Aunt Abigail said she would prefer sleeping in a Pullman berth, which she had never done but once in her life. Faith was quite bewildered. She had heard of small New York apartments, but she hadn't dreamed that rooms could be quite so small. She slipped away to the farthest end of the dark hall and cried softly against the wall. It was she who had got her aunts into this—because she had wanted to spend a winter in New York, studying domestic science. Domestic science, indeed! What did New York know about it?

But presently she heard her Aunt Abigail calling her; she dried her eyes and felt her way back to the living-room, where the old ladies were seated.

“Yes, auntie,” she said.

“How much is it we are to pay for this apartment?” inquired her relative, somewhat imperiously. “Your Aunt Deborah says the rental is one hundred and twenty-five dollars



a month ; my recollection is that the lease calls for one hundred and fifty."

"You are right, auntie," acceded Faith ; "it is one hundred and fifty. Oh, I wonder if you will ever forgive me !"

"Tut !" said Aunt Abigail, whom Faith's tears always softened. "Tut, child, and don't make things worse by crying. We were all unwise in engaging this place without coming down to New York to see it. But since the Tookeys were relatives of Elder Beaconsmith, and the elder had been a neighbor of your Aunt Deborah and myself all his life, I assumed that we might depend on his recommendations, even though we did not know the Tookeys."

"Elder Beaconsmith had never seen this apartment himself," reminded Aunt Deborah.

"Then he should have seen it before he recommended it !" snapped the elder aunt, her false teeth coming together as if she meant it. "I shall never put any trust in the elder again—never !"



"We are here," suggested Aunt Deborah ;  
"perhaps we can manage somehow to make  
the best of it."

Miss Abigail regarded her sister severely.

"Deborah," she said, with some sarcasm,  
"will you be kind enough to tell me how you,  
for instance, are going to make the best of it?  
You cannot get into your bedroom unassisted,  
and even if all of us together were to hoist  
you over the foot of the bed and deposit you  
in that inaccessible patch of room beyond, you  
could not turn around. Tell me, how are you  
going to make the best of that?"

Miss Deborah looked puzzled.

"Possibly the room might be slightly rear-  
ranged," she hinted.

"Possibly the bed might be removed,"  
sniffed Miss Abigail. "Deborah, you are too  
stout for New York ; you cannot live here."

"If I remain here long I shall be very  
much compressed," retorted the other, with a  
half smile at Faith. "Don't you think, Abi-  
gail ——"



"No, I don't!" her sister interrupted. "My own room is no larger than yours, as you can see for yourself. Luckily, I am lean, so I shall have a place to sleep to-night. Faith, of course, can crawl in anywhere. But, seriously, we must not consider living in such a place as this. To-morrow we will advertise this apartment for rent again, and return to Chester as soon as possible."

"Oh, auntie!"

Faith's voice was appealing.

"Abigail ——" began Miss Deborah.

"In my eighty-odd years," broke in the other, "I have never lacked for space to move in, nor for air to breathe. I shall not begin now."

"But auntie ——"

"Tut!" said Miss Abigail. "Look about you, Faith, and tell me how we can manage this living-room. It is no larger than a cabin on a steamboat of the Chester and Boston Line. It is not as large as the coat-room off our hall at home. I shall not live in a coat-room—never!"



Faith dashed her handkerchief across her eyes. After all, she wasn't much more than a child—only a little over seventeen—so she had a right to cry if she chose.

"It certainly is crowded," she conceded, with a little wail in her voice; "but perhaps it won't seem so bad after we are used to it. I don't believe the Tookeys meant to deceive us, auntie. They are so accustomed to this sort of thing that perhaps they don't know the difference. They never lived at 'The Oaks,' you know—the dear old place! Probably they really liked this apartment, and—and don't you think we can grow to like it ourselves?"

"No," declared Miss Abigail.

"It is real clean and nice," Faith insisted. "The walls are really pretty, and the furnishings are—good."

She came near saying that the furnishings were better than the Palmer homestead boasted up at Chester, but she checked herself in time.

"The furniture is partly mahogany," she



went on, "and most of the rugs are oriental. There's a real marble bust in the window over there. And, oh, the kitchenette is just as dear as any place could be."

"The kitchenette!" said Miss Abigail, with a contemptuous gesture and accent.

"Let us be reasonable," urged Miss Deborah. "We are here, and it is not the Palmer way to back out, Abigail. You have often said so yourself. When the trunks come I have no doubt we can find some means of storing away our clothes ——"

"Where are we going to put the trunks themselves?" inquired the elder sister, bitingly.

"I am sure the janitor has a place in the basement," put in Faith. "Of course there must be ——"

"Dinner is served, mum," said Ann, putting her head in at the door from the hallway. This was the only door the living-room boasted.

Faith was glad of the interruption; first, because she always found it advantageous to



gain time when Aunt Abigail was in a mood of this sort, and, second, because she was ravenously hungry. The sandwiches on the train hadn't satisfied her. So she lost no time in following the servant to the diminutive dining-room, and when her aunts arrived she was seated at the head of the table, carving the steak. She meant to be head of the household from now on, and take all the burdens of housekeeping off the shoulders of her aunts. Hadn't she come to New York so that she might learn how to care for them properly!

"Aunt Debby," she said, "perhaps you'd better take that chair by the door—it's easier to get into it. Oh, I'm beginning to like this already. It's going to be fun, I know."



## CHAPTER II

### NIGHT

FAITH awoke by degrees and lay languidly in bed, wondering what time of night it might be. She wasn't in the habit of awaking in the night like this; nor could she understand why she was unable to go back to sleep.

It was quite dark in her little box of a room, and from the drip, drip outside she knew the rain was still falling. Somewhere, in the dim distance, she heard the clang of a street-car gong, and she wondered if the cars ran all night. Most likely they did, she thought, for in New York everything was different. Presently she heard the rattle of the elevator. This had been the last noise she had heard before she fell asleep. No doubt people who lived in the building were coming and going, regardless of the clock. What a mighty, mysterious town it was!



Faith composed herself for the twentieth time, closed her eyes, and tried to sleep—but in vain. So she fell to thinking about the strangeness of her own lot, and the unexpectedness of it all. It scarcely seemed possible that she could be in the metropolis of America, destined to spend a whole winter there—unless Aunt Abigail persisted in her threat to abandon or resublet the apartment and return forthwith to Chester. At first Faith had really been alarmed over this threat; but she did not take it quite so seriously now that a way had been found to get Aunt Deborah to bed. Faith herself had engineered the condensation of the furnishings, as it were, so the old lady could squeeze inside her bedroom.

Faith's own bedroom was even smaller—so very small that it wasn't much more than a Pullman berth, as Miss Abigail had said. But Faith had always liked Pullman berths, and now she felt real warm and comfortable and—yes, drowsy. She believed she was going to sleep again at last.



But just as she arrived at this conclusion she heard a step in the kitchenette, next door to her room. Instantly she sat up in bed, alarmed.

“Auntie!” she called. This would fit either of the aunts. “Auntie—what’s the matter?”

Somebody was rattling some pans in the kitchenette, so she got no answer. In the hallway she could see the reflection of a light. Surely one of her aunts must be ill, she thought. Jumping out of bed she hurried around to the kitchenette door—and encountered Ann.

“Mercy!” Faith exclaimed. “How you frightened me! What’s the matter—what are you doing here in the middle of the night?”

“It’s mornin’, miss,” said the servant.

“Morning!—Well, what time do you New Yorkers get up? We don’t need breakfast so dreadfully early. Half-past seven will be much better. Why, it’s dark as pitch yet.”



"It's ten minutes past seven," said Ann.

Faith glanced at a little clock that hung on the wall over the small stationary laundry tubs. Sure enough, Ann was right.

"But what makes it so terribly dark?"

"Well," laughed Ann, "it did was rain, you know; if it didn't was rain, it didn't be quite so dark—not quite."

"Do you mean that it is always nearly as dark as this—always, here in this apartment?" Faith demanded, incredulous.

"We make light 'nough ourselves," assured the servant. "Mr. Tookey he get big, big glass lights; so don't care if be dark."

For a minute Faith stood looking at Ann in astonished silence. She understood now why the Tookeys had installed the great patent electric bulbs in the living-room and dining-room. Sure enough, they needed big ones. But she was wondering what Aunt Abigail would say.

"Ann," she ventured, "I'm afraid we were never, never cut out for New Yorkers."



Then she returned and groped her way back to the toy bedroom where she had slept. Running up the shade at the single window, she peered out. From somewhere above she caught a few faint, gray rays of daylight. Opening the sash, she put her head out and looked up. Fifteen stories above she saw a somber patch of drab, from which the rain fell into her face.

Faith closed the window and sat there in the deep gloom for a few minutes, gazing across at a wall and some black windows opposite—so near that it seemed as if she might reach them by leaning out. So this was the place to which they had come for a happy winter! Night all the time, except for those glaring, hideous electric bulbs. Night when they went to bed; night when they got up; night at noon, doubtless.

She drew the curtain again and threw herself upon the bed, half laughing, half crying. It was ridiculous enough, surely; but it was really serious. Could anybody actually live



in such a place? Did people really do it, here in New York? It seemed incredible—yet the Tookeys had kept this very apartment for three years, according to Elder Beaconsmith. No wonder they had to get away to Florida.

Faith slipped into some clothes and went to Aunt Abigail's room. The old lady was sleeping quietly—an hour or more past her usual rising time. Faith kissed her and she awoke abruptly.

"Are you ill?" Abigail demanded, sitting up.

"No, auntie; only—only it's morning, you know."

"It is night," declared the old lady.

"Yes, but it's morning just the same." Faith's voice was tearful. "Oh, auntie, it's this dreadful apartment again! What shall we do? Ann says it is always night here—always, even when it doesn't rain."

Miss Abigail brushed her fingers across her eyes.

"What time is it?" she inquired.



"Not quite half-past seven, auntie."

"Impossible!" asserted the old lady. "Turn on the light, Faith, and look at my watch. It is under my pillow."

The dim glow of the bedroom bulb vaguely outlined the tiny room. Mr. Tookey hadn't thought it necessary to get special lights for the sleeping quarters.

"It is twenty-seven minutes past seven," announced Faith, a moment later.

Her aunt lay back on the pillow with a groan.

"Deliver us!" she said. Then she sat up again. "Faith," she went on, "we cannot stay in this abominable city. It is accursed of heaven. It fears the light of day and flees from it. I trust you are satisfied, child. I trust that now you will appreciate your home at Chester."

Faith sank to her knees and buried her face in the bed. There seemed nothing she could say. But at that moment Aunt Deborah came scuffling in, attired as she had slept.



"I heard voices," she said. "What is the trouble, Abigail? Why are you up, Faith?"

"She is up," exploded the other old lady, "because it is morning. It is daylight, Deborah—daylight at Chester, but night in New York. We have leased six months of New York's night, at a hundred and fifty dollars a month. Make the best of that, Deborah, if you can."

Then Aunt Abigail laughed rather stridently, which was a very unusual thing for her to do. It was not often that she laughed at all.

At eight o'clock they breakfasted, in dismal silence for the most part. Faith's eyes were red and she felt no inclination to talk. Somehow, the glare of the big electric light made her look thin and pale. It showed up a thousand wrinkles on the old ladies' faces.

Ann made a very delicious omelet and some crisp toast, along with coffee; but Faith had small appetite. The awakening in New York was so different from what she had pictured.



Living in New York was so different from merely visiting there. When she was a pupil at Fordyce Hall, up on the Hudson, she had come to the great town several times on shopping tours with other girls and a chaperon, and once she had enjoyed a little week-end party at Kathryn Love's home on Madison Avenue. Of course the Loves had a great and beautiful house, with worlds of light and air and sunshine. But that was simply visiting in New York, she reflected, ruefully ; this was living there. Well, the tiny rooms weren't so bad ; but the darkness was quite intolerable. She was forced to agree with Aunt Abigail that they couldn't live in this terrible apartment.

The solemn breakfast was nearly over when the door-bell jangled sharply in the kitchenette. Ann answered the summons, and a moment later they heard a voice at the door that caused Faith to drop her knife on the floor.

"It's Leah Churchill!" she cried, and,



shoving back her chair so that it crashed against the sideboard, she was off down the hall.

“Leah!” she exclaimed, confronting a tall and handsome young lady in raincoat and rubbers. “Leah!—what a surprise! I had no idea you would come so early. Why, you’re in time for breakfast. Oh, how glad I am to see you!”

“I’m glad enough to see you, too; but I’ve had my breakfast, dear. You see, not everybody is lazy in New York, and I’m on my way to school. I should have been at the train to meet you last night if you had written me in time. The letter came this morning. Why didn’t you let me know?”

“Because I didn’t want to trouble you,” Faith answered, hanging up the caller’s dripping raincoat on a hook in the hall. There was no room for a regulation hall-tree. “Of course I’d have been awfully glad to have you at the Grand Central Station—what a tremendous depot it is! But it didn’t seem



necessary to drag you out like that—after dark. Besides, New Yorkers must be independent. I am a New Yorker now ; at least, for a while. I mean to look out for myself just as other people do. But oh, Leah ! I'm afraid we can't stay here. We're in dreadful trouble—we have an apartment that's dark as night. Isn't it dreadful ? ”

Leah Churchill laughed.

“ You seem to be real cozily situated,” she observed. “ New Yorkers don't mind a little darkness.”

Leah was a girl quite different in type from Faith, both in appearance and manner. She was of the imposing kind, a year or two older than her friend, and by no means so impulsive. In fact, she was quite womanly. Faith was pretty in a girlish way ; Leah almost had the grace and beauty of a young matron. Her eyes were violet, her hair inclined to be golden, and her features classic.

They were abreast of the dining-room now, and the old ladies rose to greet her. As sum-



mer residents of the ocean town of Chester, the Churchills of course were well known to the Misses Palmer, who had lived at "The Oaks" all their lives. Leah's real home, however, was in Boston.

"I am so delighted to see you here in New York," she said, taking Miss Abigail's hand first and then Miss Deborah's. "Faith told me during the summer that you expected to spend the winter here, but I didn't know until this morning that you had really found an apartment. From what Faith says, I'm afraid you don't like it. But you mustn't mind, Miss Palmer"—Leah turned toward Aunt Abigail—"because you know that in a city one has to put up with inconveniences. I live with my married cousin while I'm studying in New York, and really, she and I are getting to be good sports. We call her little apartment our train of Pullman cars, because the rooms are all in a string, and so tiny."

"Are they dark?" inquired Miss Abigail, meaningly.



Leah hesitated.

"No," she admitted, after a moment; "no, they are not dark, because, you see, they are on the nineteenth floor."

The Misses Palmer gasped.

"Lord help you!" said Miss Abigail.

"Oh, some of the very best apartments in New York are up in the clouds," assured Leah, laughing. "Unless you get on the outer side of a building you almost always find the lower-floor apartments dark. The higher you go, the lighter they are. It's like going up out of a well. But a great many people don't mind the dark. They get big electric lights and let it go at that. Why, it's part of living in New York! We can't all have light. If I were you, I shouldn't mind it one bit—only if you had let me help you I might have suited you better. Dear me! why didn't you let me hunt a light apartment for you? There are plenty of them to be had."

"I shall tell Elder Beaconsmith what I



think of him," said Miss Abigail. "The Tookeys are his cousins or uncles or something—I don't care what. I shall tell him —— But, Deborah, give Miss Churchill a chair if she can get through. I shall hold the elder responsible for this."

The old lady cast her eyes about with mingled hauteur and despair.

"I am so sorry you didn't let me know," repeated Leah. "Then you might have had a light apartment instead of a dark one. But really, this is cute and pretty—and so tastily furnished!"

"Suppose," spoke up Faith, suddenly, "that we found a chance to sublet this place, or re-sublet it, or whatever you might call the act of getting rid of it—do you think you could help us find a nice light apartment now? Do you think you could, Leah?"

"Faith," said Aunt Abigail, "when we move again we will go back to Chester. I think we have had all the New York apartments we want."



Leah did not give any heed to this opinion on the old lady's part.

"Of course we can," she said, answering Faith's question. "Why, there are always light apartments to be had. Only—one must pay for them."

"Oh, if you will only help me get one!" Faith was in ecstasy.

"I know of one now," Leah answered. "At least, I've heard about it—only after your experience here I shouldn't want to recommend it until I investigate very carefully. One of the girls in my school is going to California in October with her people, and they want to rent their apartment, furnished, for the winter. I've never seen it, but I understand it is quite high up. I'll tell you, Faith: come with me to school to-day and at noon we'll run up and see the suite. It's on Morningside Drive—just a lovely site."

Faith looked at Aunt Abigail. It seemed a good deal to ask of the old lady—this proposal to move before they had been in New York a



day. But the situation was desperate and delay probably meant a quick retreat to Chester. Faith had spent many days and weeks arguing her aunts into closing "The Oaks" for the winter and taking this unfortunate Tookey apartment in New York. She did not want to go back, and she didn't mean to go if she could help it.

"Auntie," she said, "I really think I'd better go."

"I shall take no other apartment in New York," said Aunt Abigail, with finality.

"But if it should be just the very thing we want," said her young relative, demurely, "we'd dreadfully hate to lose it. Now just make yourselves as comfortable as possible in this old dark hole, and I'll be back as soon after noon as I possibly can."

"I do not think it safe for you to go about New York alone," remarked Aunt Deborah.

"And certainly you will not engage any apartment ——" Aunt Abigail began.

"Of course not, auntie—I'll just look at it.



Now don't get uneasy ; you know I'm not a little child, and I've been in New York before. Oh, I do hope we can get it ! ”

“ I want no apartment —— ” Aunt Abigail did not finish, for Faith interrupted her with a good-by kiss. Then the two girls were gone.



## CHAPTER III

### THE ELEVENTH FLOOR

WHEN Faith returned, shortly after one o'clock, she was quite breathless from her haste and excitement. She threw off her coat and gave the wet umbrella to Ann.

"Auntie," she said, "it's the most beautiful place in the whole world—I just know it is! Why, the view is simply magnificent. I suppose one can see at least ten thousand roofs from the living-room windows!"

"Roofs?" inquired her aunts, together.

"Yes, roofs! I never supposed roofs could make a beautiful landscape; but they do, up there at Morningside Heights—they really do. You see, they are so far below, and they reach out ever and ever so far, toward the ocean, Leah said. And the apartment itself is just the dearest little place you ever saw. You'll



fall in love with it the very minute you open the door. It's so light, for it's on the eleventh floor, and ——"

"Your Aunt Deborah and I never could get up there," interrupted Miss Abigail. "Oh, I know there are elevators; but elevators are worse than climbing stairs. They shake your Aunt Deborah quite to pieces. Eleventh floor, indeed!"

"But these elevators on Morningside Drive positively do not shake!" cried Faith. "There is not one single little shake to them, and I guess I know. Now, auntie, I'm going to describe the rooms to you."

"You will waste your time ——"

"First I'm going to get your slippers," the girl said, soothingly. "I believe you've been wearing your new shoes all the morning. Here they are—how lucky you put them in the satchel. How wonderfully easy it is to find things in an apartment!"

The old lady submitted to the ministrations of her young relation, but while she was be-



ing duly slippered and petted she made it plain that she had determined to return to Chester just as soon as some arrangement could be made about the apartment under lease. And of course Deborah and Faith would go with her. She realized now the folly of coming to New York. Of all the awful cities, it was the worst. She had always known this, to be sure; but she had never realized it as she did now. She had not supposed that even sinful, benighted people preferred darkness all the time. The very architects who built these black and tiny holes for folks to live in were indexes of the city's moral state.

But Faith gave no great heed to these diatribes. She had learned that she had a most mysterious power over her Aunt Abigail. She well knew how to use that power.

"In the first place," she said, "there are seven rooms—oh, so wonderfully light, all of them!"

Up to that very morning, daylight had been



quite an unappreciated gift to Faith Palmer. All her life she had reveled in it unrestrained. But of a sudden she had come to feel it a most wonderful blessing, to go into ecstasies over.

“Oh, so light!” she went on, with an expression in her face that was almost rapture. “From the living-room, auntie, I am sure we can see the sun come up over those lovely roofs—if it ever does come up again! Wouldn’t it seem strange, after living in this dungeon, to see the sun come up? Well, the dining-room is just as wonderful—just as light as day! Then the kitchen—oh, I suppose it would be called a kitchenette, just like this one; only it’s a daylight kitchenette, you know. But I think it is really a little bigger, though perhaps it only seems so.

“There are four other rooms,” she went on, “and every one of them is light. There are three of the lightest and cutest little bedrooms you ever saw, besides the maid’s room—and even that is light! I’ll take the littlest room, of course—I can imagine I’m traveling



on the overland train to California and have taken the whole section. Your room and Aunt Debby's are real large and commodious——" Faith laughed and winked at her Aunt Deborah. "At any rate, they are so cozy; and there is a pretty tiled bathroom between them—just for you two. Aunt Debby can get into her room, oh, so easily, because the bed is a single one and the chiffonier and dressing-table are so nice and little. There is a comfy willow rocker in each of your rooms, with pretty bright cretonne cushions. I think there is a straight-backed chair in one of the bedrooms—I forget which. Only it can't be in my room, for there isn't any space. I have a dear little three-cornered stool to sit on."

"Lunch is served, mum," said Ann, at that moment, peering in and addressing Miss Abigail. She had assumed from the start that the elder aunt was the one in authority—in which assumption she was quite correct. Miss Deborah never had a great deal to say about domestic affairs, or financial affairs, or any-



thing else, her sister having always constituted herself head of the house.

The three of them sat down to their electric-lighted luncheon; but now Faith was quite gay. She rattled on with the story of her discovery of this remarkable daylight apartment. But suddenly she remembered something else:

“Oh, I forgot to say that I met the dearest girl this morning, and she lives right in that same apartment building up on Morningside Drive. Don't you think that will be splendid—having a friend in the same house with me? It's the funniest thing, too, because her name is Prudence. Imagine a Faith and a Prudence being friends! Her full name is Prudence Lane, and she's as pretty as the name itself. She is just my age, and I am sure I shall like her, though she's a different sort of girl altogether. I mean that she has always lived in New York, and always in apartments of one sort and another. She thinks I am funny because I spoke to her.”



"Spoke to her?" inquired Aunt Abigail, as Ann brought in the dessert.

"Yes; you see, we were coming down in the elevator and Prudence got in at the fifth floor, I think. Somehow, I don't know why—only I suppose I was so happy that I couldn't help it—I just said 'Good-morning.' Then she said 'Good-morning,' and we talked a little on the way down; and finally I asked her if she lived there, and told her I hoped to live there myself. She looked at me so funny for a minute; and of course I knew that people in New York were not supposed to speak to one another, except when somebody introduced them—and not always even then. Kathryn Love has often told me that, you know. So have other New York girls up at Fordyce Hall. But I don't care; we got acquainted and told each other our names, and I asked her to come to see me when we get settled on the eleventh floor."

"I certainly do not approve of your making promiscuous acquaintances in New York,"



said Aunt Abigail, severely. "Do you know who this Prudence Lane may be? I am very sorry you acted so unwisely as to ask her to our—our apartment."

The old lady hesitated over the last two words, because to say them was practically an admission that Faith had won her diplomatic campaign for the suite on Morningside Drive. And "our apartment" was not lost upon Miss Faith. There was a curious twinkle in her brown eyes, but she tried to look at her aunt gravely.

"I am sure that Prudence comes of a nice, refined family," she answered. "Her father has an office on Wall Street and her mother goes to a beautiful big church up there—I forget its name—and Prudence is taking music and French at Somebody's School on Morningside Heights. I am sure she comes of good stock, as you say."

"In New York," said the aunt, "one cannot be certain even of persons descended from the best of stock. I am sorry you spoke to



this Prudence Lane. If she is not a proper associate for you I shall take matters into my own hands."

Then the old lady abruptly asked :

"What is the rental of the apartment you praise so highly?"

Faith's face slowly suffused with color and for a moment her eyes sought the floor. She scraped the rug under her chair with the toe of her shoe, and nervously fumbled a spoon.

"I am afraid you will think it dreadfully high," she answered. "But Leah says one must pay for things one likes in New York. Of course we might get an apartment very much cheaper, but not one we would like as I know we'll like this one. Then you must remember that we are taking the apartment furnished, and that makes quite a difference. But it never would pay us to buy all the furniture or ship our own down from Chester—we couldn't get many of our Chester pieces into the rooms at all. So, as Leah says, we might better pay the higher rental, since we



can afford it—and it's only for a little while. If we expected to live in New York permanently, it would be out of the question, I know. But don't you think we can do it—such a beautiful daylight apartment with such a lovely view?"

"What is the rental?" repeated Aunt Abigail, frowning.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars a month," said Faith, with a little tinge of despair in her voice.

Aunt Deborah extended her hands toward heaven in a gesture of complete dismay. Aunt Abigail sat stiff-backed, with face unrelaxed.

"Faith," said the latter, "it is only a little while since you secretly engaged yourself as a teacher at the McAllister School near Chester, at a salary of forty dollars a month, so that you might help with the family expenses, as you expressed it. And now you deliberately propose that we spend two hundred and fifty dollars a month for a mere roost on which to



live—a string of closets on the eleventh floor in this dreadful city ! ”

“ I know it,” Faith confessed, with her eyes downcast. “ I feel just as guilty as can possibly be. But when I went to teaching, auntie, I supposed we were poor, you know, and I didn’t want to be a burden. I had lived with you such a little time, for my poor daddy had just gone away forever and I was a foolish little goose and didn’t know anything at all. I gave up the school when you told me that we had—oh, I don’t know how much money—and went to school myself, at Fordyce. And then you were so good and kind, and came down here to New York with me because I wanted so much to study here this winter—and I know what a dreadful sacrifice it was for you, both of you, to close up ‘ The Oaks ’ and do it. It is frightfully hard to get used to New York ways—and New York prices. I just know that it’s wickedly extravagant to think of taking that apartment ; only I thought that since we really had the money to do it



with, if we wanted to, it would be better to have the daylight, you know ——”

Faith paused and sighed heavily.

“ But maybe it’s too much to pay even for daylight, auntie ; and if you think so I’ll give it up and we’ll stay right here where we are. These electric lights are horrid, but since you’re doing it all for me, anyway, I can be happy over it. But I must write to Prudence and tell her how very sorry I am.”

There was a minute’s silence, during which the old aunts regarded one another, and alternately looked at the downcast face of the girl. To both of them Faith was the whole world itself.

“ How long before the apartment will be available ? ” inquired Miss Abigail, at length.

Faith looked up quickly, a smile flashing on her lips.

“ About the middle of October,” she said. “ We could get along here somehow for three weeks, couldn’t we ? ”



## CHAPTER IV

### NEW YORK FENCES

It was along about the first of November, and the Palmers, together with the servant Ann, had been comfortably settled for a couple of weeks on the eleventh floor of the apartment-house on Morningside Drive. The other apartment on Seventy-ninth Street had a new tenant, for the Palmers had no trouble subletting it, dark as it was. Many people in New York take dark apartments for granted.

Faith was now duly enrolled at the Morningside School of Domestic Arts. To Faith, the school was a most delightful place, and she entered into its activities eagerly. Its quarters were an old-style mansion of twenty rooms, once in a fashionable neighborhood but now wholly surrounded by stores and other business buildings. All the household arts were



taught there, even to the making of beds. Nor was the course intended for rich girls, but for girls who really expected to do household work, or, at least, supervise it. Faith was one who intended to do more than "look after things" at home. Despite the fact that they had ample means, the Palmers were the kind who lived with extreme simplicity, got along with one servant, and had no "airs."

Still, Faith had a premonition that some time things might be somewhat different. Old-fashioned ways could not last forever, and the day might come when a knowledge of modern housekeeping would be indispensable to her. She was sensible enough to know that the ways of her two old grandaunts would not suffice, and she was resolved to make the most of this wonderful opportunity to study housekeeping in New York. It scarcely seemed possible that she had really prevailed on her aunts to come.

Faith, of course, had had half a year in domestic arts up at Fordyce Hall, but the work



there was more theoretical than practical. It gave her advanced credits, however, and now she meant to get, in one winter, the better part of the course at the Morningside School of Domestic Arts.

This was a pretty big undertaking, however. Her studies included cookery, the science of food properties, serving, housekeeping, physiology, home nursing, and home management. And then if she had any time left she meant to go even farther and take house furnishing and decoration. Incidentally, she might devote some fragments of time to sewing and millinery.

Many of the students at the school lived there, in a new dormitory wing that had been added, and Faith almost wished at times that she might be a boarding pupil. But she shouldn't have come to New York at all if she hadn't been able to induce her aunts to come too. They were old and feeble, and they needed her. She would not leave them alone again at Chester—not even for the sake of an



education. What they needed most of all was a capable, trained housekeeper to care for the Chester home and for them.

This was Faith's big motive in coming down to the metropolis and studying at the most practical school she could find. It wasn't the school Leah Churchill attended, for Leah was far advanced in many ways, and was taking intricate designing and such things that Faith didn't want. She had made up her mind to eliminate everything that wasn't immediately practical. Perhaps in the future she might be able to take up "art things," as she called them. But just now there was more need at the Palmer home for somebody who understood the fine art of laundry management. Old Angeline, the antiquated servant at Chester, had been just fair at this sort of thing in her own old-fashioned way; but of course that wasn't saying much. And now even Angeline wasn't available, for she had broken down and gone away to her relatives.

The school, of course, interested Faith first.



But the wonder of living in New York was still strong upon her. New York was still a strange enigma. She was living in the metropolis, and was a part of its feverish activities; yet except for the occasional calls of Leah Churchill, who was really a transient in the city like themselves, Faith and her aunts were absolutely alone. No one had called on them—not even Miss Prudence Lane. Not a soul had come to see them while they stayed in that first dark apartment on Seventy-ninth Street, and not a single New York woman had deigned to notice them up here in this really beautiful place on lofty Morningside Heights.

Faith felt hurt and a little indignant.

“You needn’t have worried your head over Prudence,” she observed one day to her Aunt Abigail. “Probably I was a little reckless in ‘picking her up’ as an acquaintance; but it’s quite clear that she doesn’t mean to stay picked. Oh, she speaks when I meet her; but that isn’t the kind of friend I want. Per-



haps she was well named, after all, auntie, for certainly she is prudent enough about getting acquainted. She's a little suspicious of the Palmers, maybe—or, most likely, it's just because she's a thorough New York girl and doesn't care for neighbors. That's what Leah says. Why, I doubt if there are ten families in this building that know the families who live in the apartments adjoining them. Well, if Prudence doesn't care to be friendly, I'm sorry ; but I'll not lay it up against her. She has her way of looking at things, and I have mine. I don't suppose we ought to expect neighbors in New York."

There were some fifty families in the building. On the eleventh floor resided three other households, in close proximity to the Palmers, yet strangers. Nearest them, in the apartment immediately across the hall, lived an elderly couple with their married daughter and the latter's son, a youth of twenty with a tiny mustache just showing. Through scraps of conversation she chanced to hear, Faith



knew his name to be Archie, and that he was a student at Columbia University, a few blocks away. But neither Archie nor the other members of his family gave the slightest apparent heed to the Palmers—except that Archie took his hat off in the elevator when Faith was in it. She wanted desperately to ask him to be careful of his mustache, because he kept pulling it so persistently.

Another family on the eleventh floor comprised a very lordly group—father, mother, and five grown daughters. The latter overdressed tremendously, Faith thought, and over-scented themselves with perfumery, and over-talked. But none of them ever seemed to see Faith. The youngest girl was Maud. She quarreled habitually with her sisters, and Faith felt no inclination toward making her acquaintance.

The fourth tenant on this floor was a grouchy man named Duffy and his grouchy wife. Faith never heard them speak to one another except in monosyllables, as she en-



countered them in corridor or elevator; and Mr. Duffy smoked regardless of the presence of ladies.

It seemed odd to Faith that not one of these persons had taken the trouble to say a word of welcome when the Palmers moved in, or had ever inquired after the health of the two old ladies, or asked if one could be of any service to Faith in her rather heavy responsibility of caring for such feeble and aged relatives. But this was New York, so why should she expect it?

With the floors below, Faith was not so well acquainted. She saw many people, but got mere fleeting glimpses. There were men who wore silk hats and swallow-tails sometimes, after six o'clock, and women in ornate gowns. There were pert little girls and rather foppish boys, she thought; and there was one family with a dear baby she wanted to get in her arms, but didn't dare. Just one baby among them all! She understood that children under two years were not permitted in this building, but this baby had come and the parents



had refused to move. They were fighting it in the courts, somebody said. What a ridiculous place New York was !

Down in the basement, tiled and marbled and a blaze of electric lights, was a café where the tenants could take their meals if they chose. Faith and her aunts had not eaten there. Aunt Abigail said they could get their own meals at home. It was enough to pay two hundred and fifty dollars a month for their suite. They would all be paupers if they lived at that rate, she declared. Besides, she and Aunt Deborah were afraid of the elevator.

Going down in this copper-ornamented elevator one day, Faith encountered Prudence Lane, who got on at the fifth floor, accompanied by a very stately lady in a sealskin coat. Prudence had always been politely cordial with Faith, even if she hadn't called ; but now she seemed really stiff.

"Miss Palmer," she said, "let me introduce my mother."



The stately lady looked at Faith for just a second, and there was a bare suggestion of a bow. Then she looked away again, and said nothing. Faith colored, and Prudence looked uncomfortable. Then the elevator reached the bottom and the door slid open, to Faith's relief.

The next moment, however, her heart jumped with sudden anger, for, as Prudence and her mother moved away, Faith caught a fragmentary sentence. The stately lady had said something to Prudence about "the two old women with frayed clothes." Could she be referring to anybody except Aunt Abigail and Aunt Deborah—the two dearest old ladies in all the world? True enough, they were not up to date in their apparel; but Faith would not have exchanged them for all the gaudily gowned women in New York.

She was very unhappy that night, and very lonely. She had always had so many friends of her own age, and now she had not a single one. Of course she was getting acquainted



with a good many girls at the Morningside School of Domestic Arts, but none of the day pupils happened to live anywhere near Morningside Drive. Some were up in the Bronx, some in Brooklyn, some even over in New Jersey. All the girls she really liked lived in impossible places. Leah Churchill had so much night work at home that she found it hard to come; and, besides, girls were not supposed to go about alone much at night.

Disappointing, and bitter, too, was this affair with Prudence Lane. She did like Prudence—she couldn't help it. Prudence was a fair, clear-skinned girl, with blue eyes and curly hair, and a face that Faith thought almost soulful at times. There was something about Prudence that puzzled Faith. Once or twice she had seen her with eyes suspiciously red. But, since Prudence hadn't called or invited Faith to call, there had been no chance for any confidences—and of course Prudence didn't want any, Faith assured herself. Then she remembered the formal stiffness of the



girl in the elevator that day, and the words she had overheard just afterward. Faith's indignation got the better of her and she related the incident in part to Aunt Abigail, omitting the reference to the frayed clothes.

Aunt Abigail could be the incarnation of haughty dignity when she chose. With her, it was an unforgivable offense to slight the Palmer name. And, in reality, the Palmers did come from distinguished Colonial and Revolutionary stock—stock as proud as any in the country.

"The New York hussies!" she exclaimed, thus characterizing Mrs. Lane and her daughter. "In future, Faith, have nothing whatever to do with them. I have always been sorry that you spoke to this 'nobody' girl and sought her acquaintance. You are rash in such matters; but perhaps this will be a lesson to you."

But somehow Faith could not feel much resentment toward Prudence. She was such a mild-mannered girl, Prudence was, and so



pretty and—and just a little sad. Faith was sure the exclusiveness wasn't her fault ; she had simply been brought up that way. It was the fault of New York, where people were proud and puffed up with imaginary importance. They put a false value on clothes and display and all that sort of thing. Faith was glad that such "vanities," as Aunt Abigail called them, did not have much place back in Chester. Except among the summer colony of Boston folks, the little city was almost as plain as a country town, and no one thought an iota less of the Misses Palmer because their dresses were out of style. Indeed, how would the two old ladies look arrayed in the fashion of pompous New York? Faith laughed when she thought of it.

The fifth floor, where the Lane apartment was located, was one of the expensive parts of the building. Ann told Faith this ; Ann had heard it from some of the other servants in the apartment-house. The rental of the Lane suite of nine rooms was three hundred dollars



a month, without any furnishings. And according to Ann's information Mr. Lane had furnished it very expensively. The drawing-room was distinctly colonial—Faith judged from the reports Ann brought her, though of course Ann didn't know colonial from rustic. There were beautiful tapestries, and oil portraits, and a wonderful colonial silver service. With all this, the Lanes were very exclusive. They had nothing to do with anybody in the building; but occasionally they entertained outsiders, with down-town caterers, flowers and a great deal of fuss.

“They make big swell!” said Ann.

“I wonder if they are really better than anybody else,” sighed Faith. “Of course if I had known how grand and mighty they were I shouldn't have tried to get acquainted with Prudence. I suppose her mother thinks I did it because I wanted to force myself into their set. Well, my own set suits me well enough; only the trouble is that here in New York I haven't any set.”



"You be get some set after while," condoled Ann. Her English was rather amazing, but her comprehension was better.

"Well, I don't just see where I am going to get it, Ann. All of New York seems to be divided up into little frigid zones, with high fences separating them. But there aren't any really fences; there aren't even any yards in New York—at least, not the sort where neighbors can get acquainted over the fences, talking about the flowers and chickens and cherries, you know. Did you ever live in the country, Ann?"

The maid's eyes grew suddenly bright and her expansive face beamed.

"Before I come America!" she exclaimed. "Oh, yes, I live on farm for many whiles!"

"Then you know how glorious it is. Of course I never lived in Europe; I've never even been there, but I suppose they have fences—don't they, Ann?"

"They be do," assured the maid.

"And they have neighbors—people who



care something for each other, and don't care if one's clothes are a bit out of style, and—and aren't always thinking how much better they are?"

"Yes," laughed the maid; "nobody better; anyhow, nobody be better where I live."

Then she grew suddenly sober, as the recollection of her own far-away home came back to her—the home she might never see again.

"Everybody live on ground," she added; "not up in sky. No sky-houses. Can't have fences where people sleep an' eat an' stay in sky."

She looked out of the kitchenette window, which opened on a court. The Palmer apartment was on the top floor, and that was what made it so light. Only two of the rooms, the dining-room and living-room, faced in the direction of Morningside Drive, eleven stories below. The kitchenette window had for a view only the opposite brick wall of the other wing of the court, together with the window of the corresponding kitchenette of another



apartment. Below lay a dizzy reach of brick, punctured with tier upon tier of kitchenette windows, down into the abysmal regions at the bottom. Here, at the base of the wall, was the cemented space designated as the "court," which was the nearest approach to a yard the building could boast. But nobody ever went into this yard except the janitors and the men who collected the ashes. The children never played there—indeed, they were expressly forbidden to set foot there. They played in the street or on the steep slope of Morningside Park on the other side of the stone coping that bordered Morningside Drive. True, they were favored far beyond the lot of most New York children, who hadn't any park to play in. This, indeed, was a very beautiful part of New York, and very wonderful, and very expensive. But in Faith's frame of mind at the moment all its beauty and wonder did not atone for her loneliness.

"Can't have fences up in sky," repeated Ann, still gazing at the wall opposite.



“Not the right kind of fences,” sighed Faith, as she stood there with the maid, looking out absently. “The New York fences are all imaginary, like the one Prudence’s mother has built. Oh, Ann, I do like New York; yet I don’t like it. I’m happy; yet I’m wretched. But I’m going to try to forget the things I don’t like—only I should love to know some girls who haven’t any of these New York fences at all! The only New York girl I really know is Kathryn Love, and she is up in school at Fordyce Hall, where I was last year. But even if she were home, I suppose she has plenty of fences—though I don’t believe she would have any with me. Her people put on a good deal of style, and all that; but Kathryn knows all about my aunts and their ways, and she doesn’t lay it up against them, or against me, because they dress in such old-fashioned clothes and wear their things such a dreadfully long time. Neither does Betty Fairchild! She’s a Boston girl, you know, who lives at Chester in the



summer. She's at Fordyce, too. Betty and her people came from Chester originally, and they've known my aunts all their lives. Oh, I do wish Betty and Kathryn were in New York now!"

Then Faith turned away from the window abruptly.

"Ann," she said, changing the subject, "how many kinds of cake do you think we ought to have for my house-party? You know it's only two weeks before the girls will be here."

"Two kinds be 'nough," was Ann's opinion.

"I was thinking of having three; but perhaps two would be in better taste—only they must be wonderfully good. And I'm going to begin practicing on them Saturday—because I want everything just the most delicious you ever tasted, Ann. I'm going to practice on the salads, too. And I hope you will make the bread just a little lighter, Ann. Do you think you can do it?"

"I be do," acquiesced Ann.



## CHAPTER V

### THINGS TO EAT

AUNT ABIGAIL had a haughty contempt for the theater, where men and women made monkeys of themselves, as she said. She was somewhat more tolerant of the opera, however, although it had been thirty years since she had heard one. Once, when a young woman, she had heard Jenny Lind sing at the Battery in New York, and that night stood out in her memory. Therefore Faith—who wielded a mystic power over both grand-aunts—had no great difficulty in persuading Aunt Abigail and Aunt Deborah to take her to the Metropolitan Opera House to hear some of the great voices.

They heard “Faust” at a Saturday matinée, and for three hours Faith was in a magnificent dream, swayed by the music of Gounod’s opera



and fascinated by Goethe's Mephistopheles. But at last it was over, and, out among the crowds of Broadway, the realities of life came back. And those realities dealt with such commonplaces as dinner.

"Up there in the opera house," observed Faith, "it didn't seem as if I should ever want to eat again; it didn't seem as if there could ever be anything in the world any more except singing and dreaming and floating along on golden clouds, with the world underneath. But now I believe I am actually getting hungry—and as this happens to be Ann's afternoon out, don't you think, auntie, it would be great fun to have our dinner before we go home?"

Aunt Abigail looked dubious.

"I think," she returned, "that we have spent money enough for one day. No doubt we have had our money's worth, Faith, but fifteen dollars for seats at the opera——"

"I know!" said Faith. "Doesn't it seem dreadful to spend money like that! But here



in New York people do it, and keep on doing it—or how could they keep the operas going? But it was beautiful, wasn't it? It was just glorious, and I'm sure we couldn't have had any more pleasure out of fifteen dollars. But eating is different. We've got to eat, anyway."

"We do not have to eat the expensive things they probably have in these New York restaurants," retorted Aunt Abigail, as the three of them stood for a minute on the sidewalk, discussing the matter. "We can go home and get our own dinner very easily. A young lady who is studying domestic arts should not be dismayed at the prospect of getting dinner."

Faith laughed lightly.

"It would take more than that to dismay me, auntie. But that isn't the idea. I really want to see that charming restaurant up on Broadway—the one Leah was speaking of the other night. And don't you think, auntie, that part of my education here in New York



is the seeing of some of these places—just a few of them, of course—and the acquiring of knowledge in general about things and people in this great big city? If I am to uphold the Palmer station ——”

“Where is this restaurant?” inquired Aunt Abigail.

“I have the address here in my hand-bag,” Faith confessed, coloring a little. “You see, auntie, I thought perhaps we might need it to-night.”

“I see,” said Miss Abigail, with a suspicion of sarcasm. “You were quite thoughtful. I have no doubt it is a restaurant where the prices are extremely high. Child, I fear you are losing all sense of money values. New York ——”

“I’m so sorry you think so badly of me,” pleaded Faith. “I do know what money is worth, and we’ll go straight over to the subway this minute and go home. We’ll stop at the butcher’s at One Hundred and Twentieth Street and get some lamb-chops ——”



"Abigail," interrupted Aunt Deborah, in her usual subdued, questioning manner, "if we are to have lamb-chops, don't you think we might get them at a restaurant almost as cheaply as we could by cooking them at home? Lamb-chops are high, Abigail, and our gas bills have been so exorbitant."

"I do not intend to eat lamb-chops!" asserted Miss Abigail, decisively. "Lamb-chops are the highest priced of all our meats, and if they are high at home they will be high in a restaurant. If I am to eat in a restaurant, I shall content myself with a moderate meal."

Faith knew something about New York prices already, for not only had she assumed the task of buying for the Palmer household, but at the School of Domestic Arts she was getting real experience in the buying class. It was the practice to take out groups of girls and let them do the actual purchasing of supplies, under the supervision of an instructor. The girls were given the right to draw checks on the "school bank" for certain specified



sums, beyond which they could not go. They were required to keep their purchases within these limits.

"Oh, dear!" said Faith. "I wish I knew even as much about ordering at a restaurant as I know about buying things at a grocery store or market. There is one thing that has been neglected up at school—what to get and how to behave at a restaurant. I think I ought to suggest a course in such things—don't you think so, auntie? But I'm sure we might get a sirloin steak without paying very terrible prices."

"With baked potatoes," added Aunt Deborah. "I am sure, Abigail, that we can afford a steak and baked potatoes and tea at any restaurant, even in New York."

"Yes," said Faith, brightly; "potatoes are cheap, and I know how to pick out good ones. Only," she added, on an afterthought, "I don't suppose I'll have any chance to do the picking out at the restaurant. But Aunt Deborah's formula sounds just delicious—sirloin



steak, baked potatoes, and tea! Yum—won't it be good! Watch me cut a little square hole in my potato and fill it up with butter—then let it stand for two minutes, if the potato is real hot and mealy—and serve with salt and pepper as required. That's our school recipe, and that's just what I'm going to do to-night with my baked potato."

Perhaps the psychological effect of this speech was not lost even on Aunt Abigail. Baked potatoes had always been one of her weak points. There was too much "style" about "French fried" or "hashed brown," but every-day hot baked potatoes—well, they pleased her. Faith knew it very well, and Faith was a diplomatist.

"A fine big baked potato, with a hole in it full of butter!" she repeated. "Think of it, auntie!"

Apparently, Aunt Abigail did think of it. She gazed for a moment into space.

"Where is the restaurant?" she inquired again, with a rather grim look on her lips.



Faith got a slip of paper from her hand-bag.

“It’s only a few blocks up Broadway, auntie. Oh, I’m so glad we can go! I know we’ve been spending just an awful lot of money. But then you know we’ll be going back to ‘The Oaks’ some day, where we can’t spend so much ——”

“We find it possible to spend quite enough at ‘The Oaks,’ ” observed Miss Abigail.

“Yes, I know; but nothing like what we have to spend here in New York—not one-tenth part of it, I imagine. But then I know so little about money. Auntie, if I am to learn how to manage things, don’t you think you ought to teach me these—these financial things? I am just a regular goose about interest and coupons and bonds and things of that kind. I haven’t any idea in the world how much money you and Aunt Deborah get, or how you get it—only I know that you buy me every single thing I want! There must be a great deal of money, for I want so many, many things; and I know I am



dreadfully selfish. But really and truly, I don't think that a sirloin steak and baked potatoes could cost such a terrible lot of money—do you?"

"In New York," said Aunt Abigail, "there is no proportion between the value of things and the cost. In Chester one can get a steak, vegetables, tea or coffee, and dessert for twenty-five cents. Here I have no doubt it will cost us seventy-five cents apiece."

"I'm afraid we'd really better go along home," suggested Faith.

"No," said Aunt Abigail; "now that we have set out to do it, we will dine at the restaurant. I do not object, Faith, to the mere spending of the money. We can afford it. But to be a spendthrift, just because one has money, is sinful, and I do not wish you to acquire the wasteful and harmful habits of these New Yorkers about us."

"I'm sure I shall never do that," sighed Faith.

They found the restaurant, though at first,



when they looked through the door, they were sure they had mistaken the place. It didn't look like a restaurant at all. There was a large reception-hall, with red-velvet chairs, palms, marble busts, and elaborate electric chandeliers.

A colored man in livery opened the door for them, however, and they went in. Another man took their wraps, and a third led them down a richly-carpeted corridor into the eating-hall. This was a grand and dazzling room, with an elaborate mosaic floor, marble wainscoting and pillars, and, at one end, a dais for an orchestra. It was not yet six o'clock, and the musicians had not arrived. Neither had many guests. The great room was almost empty, save for waiters.

An officious man in a low-cut waistcoat showed them to a small table, placed a menu before Aunt Abigail, and said that a waiter would serve them promptly.

"You may say to him," returned the old lady, with something like a patronizing air,





“PLEASE LET ME SEE THE BILL OF FARE”







“that we desire merely a sirloin steak for three, with baked potatoes and tea.”

“Yes, madam,” said he, very politely.

“Auntie,” said Faith, when the man had gone, “please let me see the bill of fare. Dear me; how can they ever get so many things cooked? Why, there are three or four times as many things as they have on a dining-car! What a wonderful meal it would be, auntie, if one could have everything there is on this menu! Do you suppose any one ever did have such a meal?”

Faith laughed aloud at the thought.

“I do not wish to see what is on this cardboard,” returned Miss Abigail. “To me, such a list of food suggests gluttony.”

“We shall be content with our beefsteak and potatoes,” observed Miss Deborah, with a smile.

“Of course,” agreed Faith. “I don’t want a single thing else on this bill—not even ice-cream! But I’m sure it doesn’t do any harm to read it. It’s really bewildering. Do you



suppose I shall ever learn to cook half the things that are shown here? Our cooking teachers up at school ——”

Faith stopped rather abruptly. A sudden seriousness overtook her. For a minute she perused the menu card in silence, with contracted brow.

“Auntie,” she remarked, after a moment, “I—I’m afraid the prices are—are dreadful!”

“I had fully expected it,” assented Miss Abigail.

“But they are more dreadful than you expected, auntie!” Faith’s tones seemed a bit weak.

Aunt Abigail’s lips assumed a more horizontal line.

“My glasses are in my pocket,” she said, “and it is inconvenient to get them out. What—what is the price given for sirloin steak and baked potatoes?”

Faith did not answer for a minute, but studied the card in perplexity. Then she said, very slowly :



“I am sure this cannot be what he is to bring us. Oh, I wonder if it can be ——”

“What is the price?” demanded Aunt Abigail, firmly.

“Well,” said Faith, hesitatingly, “there are different prices given for beefsteak; but ‘extra sirloin for three’ is—is four dollars and a half!”

Both the old ladies straightened their backs suddenly.

“Four dollars and a half!” they said, in unison.

“But really, I’m sure that can’t be what we are getting! It would be so ridiculous!”

Aunt Abigail felt for her pocket, and, after a considerable search, produced her spectacle case and took out her heavy-rimmed gold glasses. Aunt Deborah, meanwhile, sat looking first at her sister and then at Faith.

“Let me have that thing!” said Miss Abigail.

Faith passed it over, and put her forefinger on the place. For a minute or two the old



lady could make nothing of it, but, assisted by the sharper eyes and quicker perception of her grandniece, she located the "extra sirloin for three" at \$4.50.

"And where does it say anything about baked potatoes?" she inquired presently, in a stern tone.

Faith took the menu card, with the color slowly rising in her cheeks.

"Baked potatoes," she informed them, after a distressing investigation, "are thirty cents. But that isn't—isn't so dreadfully bad, is it?"

"Thirty cents for each potato?" asked Miss Abigail, icily.

"I—I don't know," the girl acknowledged. "I suppose that thirty cents is the price for each person."

"Which will be ninety cents for the three of us." The old lady was quick enough with her mathematics. "Suppose you see what they charge for tea."

"Twenty cents—a cup," said Faith.



There was a little silence. Then Aunt Abigail announced the result of her mental problem :

“ Six dollars. Six dollars, Deborah.”

There was another silence.

“ It’s perfectly dreadful !” Faith declared. “ I’m so sorry I proposed coming here, auntie ! I ought to have known better—but Leah didn’t tell me about these horrible prices. Oh, I’m so sorry !”

Miss Abigail slowly put away her glasses, Miss Deborah watching her in a sort of dazed way. Both of them had been learning things about the metropolis, and almost every new thing they learned was an added shock. Ever since they had been in New York the standards of their peaceful, simple life had been outraged. It wasn’t that a mere item of six dollars overwhelmed them, but that six dollars should be charged for so simple a meal was quite incredible at the moment.

But the elder aunt, while being shocked at the things she found in New York, had been



acquiring, old as she was, the habit of adjusting herself to New York. It was even more sinful, more flamboyant, more wickedly wasteful than she had imagined; but she was a proud old lady, nevertheless, and by no means a stingy one. She had been accepting surprises, and she accepted this one without marked outward emotion.

“It is quite in keeping,” she said—and relaxed into a grim silence that lasted until the waiter appeared with a great tray balanced on one hand.

When Faith saw the sirloin steak, she gave a little gasp of fresh amazement. It was an inch thick, and covered a huge platter. Then there were three potatoes, each as big as a man’s two fists put together. The tea came in a large silver pot.

The waiter cut the steak for them, placed their napkins, brought them bread and butter, and water half filled with ice, and hovered around with his little attentions until Aunt Abigail told him that he need not trouble



himself any further. When he had retired for the moment, she observed, coldly :

“It is very evident that we have been mistaken for New Yorkers. Only New Yorkers would want such a monstrous beefsteak.”

Faith did not reply to this observation of her aunt's, for just then her attention was drawn to some persons whom the head waiter was ushering down the aisle in their direction.

“Auntie,” said Faith, “here come some of our neighbors.”



## CHAPTER VI

### THE UNNEIGHBORLY NEIGHBORS

THESE neighbors were Prudence Lane and her father and mother.

By this time the dinner hour was more advanced and the restaurant was well filled. Most of the tables near the one occupied by the Palmer family were taken, but there was one that was empty perhaps thirty feet away. At this the Lanes were seated.

Faith thought at first that the newcomers had not seen her or her aunts, for they took their places without any sign of recognition. When she was seated, Prudence's back was toward Faith, while Mr. and Mrs. Lane were placed so that their profiles were presented, as they sat facing each other. They were a fine-looking couple, in early middle age, and they were dressed in a rather distinguished manner



—Mrs. Lane in a semi-evening gown and her husband in a tuxedo suit. Prudence herself wore a dress much more elaborate than the one Faith had on.

“I suppose they are going to the theater,” said Faith, in an undertone, to her aunts. “Their maid told Ann that they go so much, and often dine at the restaurants before going, and then have a sort of supper somewhere afterward, and don’t get home until very late. Prudence doesn’t always go with them.”

“Since the Lanes are people who snub you,” said Aunt Abigail, “I should not concern myself over them, if I were you. Whether they get home at all need not interest us.”

“No,” agreed Faith, rather despondently, “I suppose not. They don’t concern themselves over their neighbors. But I can’t help admiring Prudence, even if they do not mix with people. Don’t you think she is lovely to-night? She is so delicate and pink and dainty in that dress—and she’s pink and



dainty anyway. I'm sure I could just love her if I had the chance."

"The Palmers never run after anybody," retorted Aunt Abigail, as she sat stiff-backed, and cut her steak. "The mighty airs of these New York 'nobodies' are most silly. Their display is quite shameless."

She cast her eyes disapprovingly about the animated scenes in the big dining-hall, where evening clothes now predominated. The orchestra was playing, and, between the strains of music, laughter and conversation reached them.

"But of course they look at things differently," Faith suggested. "Oh, I don't mean to say that it isn't foolish and frivolous and wasteful to put on so many airs that one can't speak to one's neighbors. How silly that does seem! But perhaps they can't help it!"

Aunt Abigail's lips took a sudden downward curve.

"At any rate, I don't believe Prudence can help it," Faith added. "Do you think it



would be dreadfully out of place if I were to run over there and speak to Prudence, auntie?"

"Yes," said the old lady, with emphasis; "it would. You will do nothing of the sort. We will ignore the Lanes hereafter, Faith. I hope you will notice them just as little as they notice us."

"Moreover," spoke up Aunt Deborah, "do not forget that the Palmer blood is the equal of any in New York. One of your great grandfathers, remember, was chief justice of Massachusetts; another was Minister to England; another was a colonial governor. The most distinguished statesmen and diplomats of the Puritans were your ancestors, child. Therefore mere lace and white shirt bosoms need not dismay us."

"Oh, I'm not one bit dismayed," laughed Faith. "I'd rather be a Palmer than belong to all the society sets in New York. But somehow I can't believe that Prudence Lane meant to snub me."



The dining-hall was filling up rapidly now ; and suddenly at one side, near the orchestra, a young woman appeared on a raised platform and began to execute a fancy dance.

Faith's aunts put down their knives and forks and sat watching the exhibition in fresh astonishment.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the elder aunt. "Have we come to a monkey performance?"

"I suppose it's the cabaret," said Faith. "Leah says they have a performance in almost all the restaurants nowadays."

"It is in very bad taste, to say the least," declared Aunt Abigail. "It is idiocy. I had imagined that one might eat a meal in peace, even in New York."

"There is no peace in New York," reminded Miss Deborah.

"You are right ; there is no peace," assented her sister.

"But she dances very prettily—don't you think so?" Faith asked, naively.



"No," disagreed the old lady. "But no matter how well she dances, meal time is not the hour for it. How long is she going to keep up that bobbing about on the stage?"

"I think she is finishing now—but they are giving her an encore, auntie. The people here like it, you see."

They did call the dancer back twice; and after she was finally through, a young man came upon the platform and sang very loudly in French. He was encored, too. Then came a monologue by a man who mimicked the Irish.

"We will go," said Aunt Abigail. "When I wish to see a Punch and Judy show I shall not pay six dollars for it again."

But the make-believe Irishman was called back by the applause of the diners, and during the hand-clapping Faith suddenly became aware that Prudence Lane had turned in her chair and was waving her a greeting—just a momentary, fleeting salute it was, and then Miss Prudence turned back again to her dinner.



Faith did not even have opportunity to return the recognition. But in the profiles of Mr. Lane and his wife she caught a change of expression. At the moment when Prudence turned, they had been engaged in conversation with the people at an adjoining table, but apparently the act of their daughter had been seen. Mrs. Lane spoke to Prudence with evident seriousness, and the girl kept her eyes on the table.

Faith felt the color in her cheeks, and a sense of rising indignation within her. So the Lanes had seen the Palmers, after all, when they came in, and had ignored them purposely! It was another snub, as Aunt Abigail had said.

But Prudence was not in sympathy with it; that much was evident. A puzzling thing it was to poor Faith, and that night she lay awake a long time pondering upon some of the curious inconsistencies of this new life in the metropolis.



## CHAPTER VII

### A PAIR OF GLOVES

FAITH went shopping the following week. She needed a pair of gloves and some other things, and she undertook the rather daring exploit of going alone. She and Leah Churchill had roamed the big New York stores several times since the Palmers had been in the city; but Faith had not ventured to find her way unaccompanied in this vortex known as the shopping district. Now she was just a little uneasy as she found herself whirling southward in a subway "express" train.

What an amazing thing it was, this underground railroad with its four tracks, its long cement platforms, its myriad of lights, and its rushing trains that made the roar of a Niagara. She never could quite get used to the thousands of people and the never-ending confusion. No matter how many people got off the



cars, there were more to get on—crowding and shoving one another and selfishly seizing the seats the instant they were vacated. Nobody seemed to care much for anybody else, and many women were standing in the aisle of the car in which Faith rode, clinging to the straps and swaying about while men sat unconcernedly reading their newspapers. Faith herself had no cause to complain, for a dapper gentleman instantly arose and offered her his place, tipping his hat in acknowledgment of her thanks. She did not just understand why she should thus get a seat while other women had to stand; but she observed presently that most of the women without seats were not well dressed, and certainly not pretty. She wondered if that had anything to do with it.

At the Grand Central Station stop, she left the subway, and, climbing the stairs to Forty-second Street, found herself in the midst of the city's throng of ever-moving pedestrians. Huge buildings towered all around her, and a bewildering maze of street-cars, automobiles



and wagons cluttered the roadway. She stood for a few moments uncertain of her bearings ; but, presently locating herself, she made her way to Fifth Avenue.

The Christmas shopping had set in, and it seemed as if all the women in New York must be abroad on this Saturday morning. Those who were not afoot were in the astonishing parade of automobiles that moved up and down Fifth Avenue—three autos abreast going south and three more abreast going north. They were so close together and so indifferent to the rights of pedestrians that except for the traffic policemen at the crossings Faith was sure she never could have got to the other side of the street. For a few minutes she stood watching one of these imposing officers as he stopped the parade at will or let it flow on again. Truly, she thought, he was a magician indeed, with his shrill magic whistle.

But she remembered the errands on which she had come ; so she bent her steps southward a few blocks. She had a little shopping



to do, first of all, for her aunts. This she accomplished in one of the smaller Avenue stores where Leah had advised her to go. Then she went on toward a great department-store still further south.

On Thirty-fourth Street, as she passed a confectionery shop, she chanced to see a ragged urchin gazing in at the window. He was a dirty little chap, wholly unattractive, and out of the hundreds of people who passed him not one bestowed a second glance. Why should they, when he was a mere molecule in New York, and New York had other things to look at?

But somehow Faith was reminded of the ragged little boys she had taught in the unsavory McAllister School near Chester—the worst and poorest school anywhere around that section of the country. She recalled John Baptist Condon and Jimmy Haverny, the toughest of the McAllister imps whom she had tamed a little, and she felt a queer pity for this unknown New York boy who seemed so



much like them. Besides, he was looking so wistfully at the tempting candy display. Faith was sure he didn't get candy often.

"Would you really like some?" she asked, stepping up to him.

The boy turned a pair of squinty black eyes upon her in some astonishment. There was a furtive, frightened look in them, and for a moment he seemed on the point of taking to his heels. A very homely and dirty-faced boy he was, with grimy hands and a tousled head on which sat a tattered cap much too small for him.

"Would you really like some of the candy?" she repeated.

"I ain't got the coin," he returned, staring at her.

"Oh, but I have." Faith smiled down at him, wondering what sort of home he had. "I've got ever and ever so much money, and if you want candy you shall have it. How many brothers and sisters have you at home?"

"Four," said the boy.



"Do they like candy?"

The boy disclosed his teeth in a grin.

"What kind?" asked Faith. Meanwhile she had opened her hand-bag, disclosing in its inner pocket a roll of currency. For an instant the urchin's glance dropped to this thoughtless display, and his shifty eyes had in them a sudden craftiness. Faith did not see it.

"What kind of candy do you like, and what kind do your brothers and sisters like?" she asked again.

"I like choc'late," he said; "'n' I guess they do too."

"Of course; everybody likes chocolate. Well, if you'll promise to be a real good boy, I'll buy you some of it, and some to take home. Are you a good boy most of the time?"

"I dunno."

He cast a half-concealed glance at the hand-bag again, and shifted his feet uneasily.

"Well, will you be a good boy, and not tell



stories, and not take things that don't belong to you, and not hurt boys who are smaller than you?"

The imp hesitated. This was a good deal to promise; but he got his eyes on the bag for the third time, and he said, with some emphasis:

"Yep."

"Then come inside, and we'll get a nice big box of the best chocolates they have."

The customers and clerks in the candy store watched Faith and the boy in some curiosity as they made the purchase. One woman observed in Faith's hearing that probably she hadn't been long in New York. Faith pretended that she didn't hear, but she flushed and averted her eyes.

"Now good-by, and remember that you're to be just the best boy you possibly can be," she said to her new friend, as they emerged from the shop, the boy with a two-pound box of candy under his arm. "You'll remember it, won't you?"



"Yes, ma'am," said he, and took his leave with what appeared to Faith to be unceremonious haste. She saw him running east in Thirty-fourth Street, and for a minute she watched him. Then she laughed and turned to go on her way.

"Probably he's in a hurry to get home with the candy," she reflected. "What a dear little surprise it will be for those poor brothers and sisters. I wish I knew where they lived."

She went along quite happy. She was now in the very center of the shopping maelstrom. It seemed to her as if an amazing number of streets converged at this point, and that each street was so filled with vehicles that it couldn't possibly hold any more. Overhead was a noisy elevated railroad, and, altogether, she was so confused and frightened that she might not have got across except for the big policeman who rescued her from the midst of three or four automobiles. He got her by the arm and held up one hand in an austere command to the chauffeurs. They



stopped meekly and allowed the policeman to escort her in some pomp to the opposite sidewalk.

"You must take care of yourself better than that," he said, as she thanked him with trembling lips. "These New York motor-devils are no respecters of persons," he added.

Faith was very glad her aunts hadn't seen her narrow escape. When she reached the department-store she was quite out of breath, and excited. She sat down on a friendly stool to rest.

Very big and very wonderful, indeed, seemed the store—reaching back as far as she could see and, she knew, high up in the air. She wondered how many arc lights there were, flaring away under the ceilings. She wondered, too, how many customers there were in the store, and how many clerks. Certainly not enough of the latter, though no doubt there were thousands of them. She saw scores and scores of women lined up outside the counters, trying to get a chance to buy.



Then Faith began to wonder what sort of girls these store clerks might be. Among them she saw many who didn't seem much older than she herself—and many who were pretty and refined in appearance. Where did they all live, and why were they working here in this feverish place—and did they like to work there? She wondered how she would like it herself; and she shuddered a little. Truly, Fate had been kinder to her than it had to most girls. Even though her father and mother were dead and she had come from far-off California to live with her grandaunts, Providence had dealt very gently with her. She was cared for and loved and protected. She had a dear home, and everything she needed without working for it, and a most wonderful number of things she didn't need. And then she was the only one to inherit a great deal of money, so that she never should have to work in a store or do the unhappy things so many, many girls were obliged to do in order to live.



Faith sighed and reproached herself when she reflected that, even with all she had, she had complained because she didn't have just all the friends in New York that she wanted.

She got up and asked a floor-walker to direct her to the gloves. When she found that counter she also found many customers ahead of her, so she stood there and watched the clerks and the customers.

One of the sales-girls, in particular, attracted her attention—a rather small girl, dressed, like all the women clerks, in black. Black seemed to become this girl especially well, although she wasn't eighteen in appearance. She was rather frail and white, but not sickly in looks. Indeed, her eyes were very blue and bright, and she had a most elusive dimple in her left cheek when she smiled. For the most part she was sober and thoughtful, and Faith wished she would laugh oftener, so the dimple would come.

At last a large woman, standing behind Faith, said to her, in a motherly voice :



"My dear, if you expect to get a pair of gloves this morning you must crowd your way in and insist on getting your rights. You might stand here for hours and never get up to the counter if you didn't elbow and push and fight if necessary. Why, a dozen women have crowded themselves in ahead of you, child, and you've let them do it, without a word!"

"I'm afraid I'm a poor shopper," laughed Faith; but she moved up, and, assisted by the aggressiveness of the large woman back of her, presently got to the counter.

Then, in the course of time, the sales-girl with the dimple spoke to her:

"What kind of gloves would you like?"

She had a pleasing voice, with a quiet, educated accent. As Faith caught her eyes she smiled, and the dimple chased itself in and then out again.

"A tan, please; and perhaps you'd better measure my hand. The last gloves I got are really too small for me. I suppose I'm still growing."



"Of course," said the other; "so am I. I tear out my own gloves dreadfully. Well, here are some that I think will fit you—we'll just try them on."

Faith put her elbow on the counter-pad and the girl with the dimple fitted her. Meanwhile the two chatted, about nothing in particular. But all the while Faith felt a growing interest in this pale but pretty little sales-girl, who really couldn't be much older than she, and who worked away so industriously and with such a matter-of-fact atmosphere. It was too bad, Faith thought, that she had to work in a store.

"I think these will do—and thank you very much."

"Will you take them or have them sent—charge or cash?" asked the sales-girl.

"Oh, I'll take them, and pay for them now. We haven't any charge account. You see, we always pay when we buy things. It's so much better—don't you think? Why——"

Faith paused and sat looking into her hand-



bag. She had found it hanging open on her arm. Then she fumbled in it for a minute, and took out a key and a handkerchief and a card-case.

"Why, this is strange," she said, searching again and removing some samples of cloth, a small parcel or two, and various odds and ends. "I can't find my money!"

"It may be in that other pocket," suggested the sales-girl.

"No, because I have looked." But Faith looked again. "It isn't there, and it doesn't seem to be anywhere!"

For the third time she made a thorough canvass of the pockets of the bag. She took everything out and piled them in a little heap on the counter. No money!

A dozen women were watching her now, some with impatience because they wanted to be waited on themselves, and some with a hard look of incredulity. They believed Faith to be playing for sympathy in the hope that somebody would pay for the gloves.



They knew, and the sales-girls knew, that more than one woman had worked the trick, borrowed the money, and never been heard from afterward by the lender. But happily Faith was innocent of the fact that such dishonest women existed.

For half a minute she sat bolt upright on the stool, her face a brown study. Then the expression changed, her eyes seemed to snap, and she observed with a good deal of force :

“ Oh, that little villain ! Oh-h ! If I only had him here now ! ”

Some of the women laughed, and Faith flushed to the temples.

“ I beg your pardon,” she said, turning suddenly to the girl who had waited on her. “ I beg your pardon, but I’ve had my pocket picked. And I know who did it—the little wretch ! It was a boy I felt sorry for, and—and he did look so hungry as he stood there at the candy store window. I just couldn’t resist taking him in. Oh-h ! the little robber ! I know now just when he did it.”



"Was it much money?" asked the girl back of the counter.

"N-no, not so very much—only sixteen or eighteen dollars——"

"Mercy!" interrupted the other. "I should say that was a great deal. It is more than I should want to lose. You had better report the matter to the police right away."

"It wouldn't do any good," said Faith, "because they never could find that miserable boy. And anyhow, I should not want him put in jail. I suppose he never would have done it if somebody hadn't shown him how—and he was such a little fellow. But what in the world am I going to do?"

A woman with hard lines in her face, standing near, remarked in an audible voice that it was very prettily done, but that she for one wasn't fooled. If somebody else wanted to loan her two dollars with which to pay for the gloves, well and good, but not she—oh, never!

Faith wheeled suddenly on her stool, and seldom had her brown eyes flashed as they



did now. She was as mild as a spring morning, was Faith, but deep down within her was something of Aunt Abigail's spirit.

"You are very unkind!" she said. "I have not asked you for money, nor have I asked anybody else—and I don't mean to! I wasn't even addressing you, madam, and you had no right to be listening."

Then she turned back to the clerk.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I can't take the gloves. It has been dreadful, I know, to cause you all this trouble for nothing, but it is done, and cannot be helped. Thank you ever so much ——"

"You can have the parcel sent out C. O. D.," suggested the sales-girl, her face quite troubled.

"No," she returned, after a moment's hesitation; "I'm afraid I can't. My aunts are opposed to anything of that sort. They always pay cash. Of course they're peculiar, but—but it's their way; and I think it is a good way, too. If they can't pay for a thing, they don't get it."



"Well," said the sales-girl, "I'm sorry. If you need any money to get home with, I can let you have some. I haven't much in my pocket——"

The insult bestowed by the hard-faced woman was rankling deeply in Faith's heart just then. This woman was still standing there watching her, with a cynical smile on her thin lips. Faith felt like flying at her and clawing her eyes. As to accepting even a loan while this detestable creature was there seemed quite out of the question.

"You are very kind," said Faith; "thank you ever and ever so much; but if I need any money I'd rather ask somebody who knows me."

"If you have any trouble finding your friends, come back here," invited the clerk, with a friendly smile that sent the dimple jumping again. "If you don't see me, ask for me—my name is Brenda Castle."

Faith hesitated. Then she leaned over the counter and spoke in a low tone:



“My name is Faith Palmer, and I really do thank you for believing in me. I hope I can see you some time again ; but I simply can't take any money. I'll get home somehow. Good-by.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### A PENNILESS GIRL

FAITH walked away with a confused sense of humiliation, anger and apprehension. It was her first brush against New York's under-current of crime, and the loss of her money was a rude shock to her tender sensibilities. It didn't seem as if anybody could be so depraved and ungrateful as to pick her pocket, as it were, while she was engaged in the very act of befriending the thief. But on top of this had come her distressing experience at the store—first, the mortification of being compelled to leave the gloves after she had really bought them, and, second, the uncalled-for affront of the unknown woman in the aisle. Her heart was torn with conflicting emotions, softened, however, by the recollection of Brenda Castle.

“What a dear!” Faith reflected, as she left



the store and rejoined the crowds on the street. "I'm sure I should love her if I had the chance; but I don't suppose I shall ever see her again. Oh, what a place New York is! There are so many people in it one would love to know, and so few one really can know."

She understood now just what it meant to be lonely among a great throng of people.

Once around the corner, she paused in a doorway and opened her bag again, in the hope that the thief might have left some stray coins. But she had had only a few coins, anyway, and he had scooped them out with considerable skill, along with the bills.

By this time she doubted the wisdom of her refusal to accept the small loan Brenda Castle had proffered. How silly the act now seemed. She almost convinced herself that she ought to go back and get a nickel for car fare. But she remembered that the unforgivable woman would most likely be there still. She turned away and walked resolutely up Broadway. She could walk home—and she would!



Mentally, as she walked, she performed a problem in arithmetic. Thirty-four from one hundred and twenty—left eighty-six. The Palmer apartment was up near One Hundred and Twentieth Street—eighty-six blocks away ! True, they were not long blocks, but, in addition, her path lay in a diagonal course, and this meant many blocks further.

She stopped suddenly near Times Square, as she remembered the telephone in the Palmer apartment. She might call up her aunts and ask them to send a messenger boy to her with money. But she went along again in a moment with a little laugh. It would cost a nickel to call, and where was that nickel?

On she trudged, and on and on. Faith was a good walker. The frequent "nature rambles" at Fordyce Hall had strengthened her endurance and given her courage hardihood ; but she had already walked a long distance that day in Morningside Park, before she started on the shopping trip. And now she knew that she was getting tired fast. The



events of the morning had sapped her nerve force, and she was feeling quite weak and wretched before she reached Columbus Circle at Fifty-ninth Street. It was here that she touched a corner of Central Park, stretching away to the north in a vast expanse of bare trees.

For a few minutes she sat down on a piece of stone coping to rest. Across the way she saw a drug store, and within it caught a glimpse of a soda-counter. The thought of it made her feel even weaker, for over there, in all probability, they served hot chocolate and bouillon and such things.

Hot chocolate! Wistfully did Faith gaze. Then she thought of a picture she had once seen of a tramp sitting on a bench under a tree at some city square, lonely and penniless and famished. She had felt so sorry for the man in the picture—and she felt even sorrier for him now. How dreadful, she reflected, to be in such a predicament in the midst of plenty, even luxury. She was sure she should appreciate this hereafter, all the rest of her life.



And surely she was in the midst of luxury now. It seemed to her that the stream of automobiles going up Broadway, and shooting through the park, really mocked her. Great, beautiful cars they were, most of them, gliding along so smoothly and fast that they were gone even while she watched them—but more of them came along, and more, and more. Some were black, some red, some yellow, with all shades between. Some were long touring-cars; some, limousines with glimpses of soft comforts within; some, runabouts. There was every description of automobile imaginable, and all of them were full of happy people, laughing and chatting and forgetting, perhaps, that tired and hungry people lived in New York—people without even a nickel in their pockets.

Faith felt very sorry for herself for a moment; then she laughed and got up. After all, this was just a little adventure. It would seem funny enough on the morrow. It was real funny already.



But by the time she reached Seventy-second Street the fun had gone out of it again. She was quite giddy with fatigue, and she wasn't sure she was walking in a straight line. Mentally she tried some arithmetic again and discovered that she still had some forty-eight blocks to traverse.

Forty-eight blocks! In despair, she sat down suddenly on the projecting ledge of a basement balustrade. There was a troublesome mist in her eyes, and she got out her handkerchief and tried to drive it away.

“Faith Palmer—oh, Faith!”

She raised her head suddenly and looked around. Surely the voice was familiar—a masculine voice with a good deal of melody in it. She had heard it somewhere. But just at the moment her eyes were blurred by the mist and she couldn't see the owner of it. She cast a quick glance up and down Broadway, but could not see anybody she knew or had ever seen before.

In confusion, Faith put up her handker-



chief and got to her feet. She looked at the windows back of her, then at the sky, then up and down the street once more.

“Faith Palmer—as sure as I live! Oh, Faith!”

The voice seemed to come from the street; but there was nothing in the street just then but a mighty automobile that stood throbbing and smoking, and surely the voice could not come from that!

Then a feminine voice spoke:

“Faith—look here! Can’t you see us—up in the car?”

Then she saw them. The next moment a young man bounded out of the car and strode over to her. He was a fine, manly looking youth of eighteen, dark, with black eyes, and a graceful, easy bearing. He wore a heavy automobile coat and gauntlets, and had a streak of black grease under one eye.

“Bruce Worthington!”

This surprised exclamation escaped the girl, and the color flew to her cheeks.



"The same!" said the boy, touching his cap. "I feared we'd never make you hear. I suppose you are out for a 'nature ramble,' but you choose a funny spot for a nap. Sorry to disturb you, but we thought perhaps you'd like to ride home—if you're going that way. And say, Faith, it seems mighty good to see you again. We heard you were spending the winter in New York, and mother was going to get your address and go up to see you. We're living in New York ourselves this winter; at least, the folks are. I'm in Yale, you know."

Faith offered the young man her hand, and then returned the greeting of his mother in the automobile. A bit confused the girl was for a moment, but presently she laughed.

"I wasn't exactly taking a nap," she said, "though I certainly did feel like it. I was resting while I tried to count up the number of blocks I still had to walk. I think there were forty-eight of them—or eighty-four; I wonder which. And I simply had to walk



them, you know, because I had no idea you would come along with that lovely big car."

They had walked out into the road and were standing beside the automobile. Bruce had been driving and his mother, a comfortable and seemingly young mother for so old a boy, was in the back seat.

"But there are street-cars and subways and motor buses in New York, my dear," reminded this cheerful lady.

"Oh, yes," acceded Faith; "but it takes money to ride in them."

"Money?" It was Bruce who asked the question. "What's the matter with you, Faith Palmer?"

"I haven't any money," she said, and cast a roguish but wearied glance at his mother. "I haven't even one poor little nickel, and that was why I expected to walk those forty-eight or eighty-four blocks. I could have done it, I suppose, for I've already walked thirty-eight or eighty-three—really, I can't tell you which. Anyhow, I've walked from



Thirty-fourth Street ; you can figure it out for yourselves."

"Faith Palmer!" exclaimed Mrs. Worthington, while Bruce stared.

"Oh, it's simple enough, after all," the girl explained. "In New York I imagine it's the simplest thing in the world to get one's pocket picked and lose all one's money and have to walk home. I suppose almost every one gets it done at one time or another—only every one isn't lucky enough to sit down for a nice little cry, and then look up and see a wonderful automobile right before her, waiting to carry her home."

"Faith Palmer! You get right in here this minute. Bruce, open the door. Dear me, I'm sure I should be half dead if I'd walked eighty-three blocks, or even thirty-eight. Bruce, help Faith in."

As the boy threw open the door and took the girl's arm he observed, with a chuckle :

"If I'm not mistaken I rescued you once before, when you had been taking a nature



ramble up near Fordyce. Only that time you and Esther Kendall were lost in a snow-storm and had missed the road by twenty feet and had given yourselves up to perish—remember?”

Faith laughed rather wearily.

“And you nicknamed me Miss Never Forget, and said you’d never forget me—and you haven’t. You’re like a good prince or knight in a story. Well, you don’t know how glad I am.”

She sank on the cushion beside Mrs. Worthington, a deep sigh escaping her.

“You poor dear!” said the lady, drawing a fur robe almost over her. “And you’re so cold, too, aren’t you?”

“And so hungry!” murmured Faith, with just the trace of an arch look in her weary eyes, as she peeked out over the edge of the robe.

Then the car shot ahead and clipped off the blocks of upper Broadway at the speed of a railroad train.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE WEEK-END PARTY

FAITH stood under the vaulted dome of the Grand Central Station, amid the throng of incoming and outgoing travelers. There was an anxious look on her face, and her eyes roved uneasily from the big clock on the wall to the iron gates that led to the train platforms. Trains were always late, she thought; especially when people were coming whom one wanted so much to see. And it did seem as if every train on the railroad must have come in except the one that was to bring down the house-party, as she had laughingly put it, from Fordyce and Vassar. Two-thirds of the house-party was coming from Fordyce—Betty Fairchild and Faith's roommate of the previous year, Rita Maxon. The other third was from Vassar—Esther Kendall, who had played



a rather conspicuous part at Fordyce the preceding winter. What a long time it seemed to Faith since those happy but somewhat tempestuous Fordyce days, though in reality she had left the school in June and it was now only the middle of November.

She looked at the clock again, and walked over to the bulletin-board, and then stood back and studied the clock for the fortieth time. Then one of the iron gates was suddenly shoved back and from the opening emerged the advance guard of a fresh train-load of people from somewhere. Faith retreated a little so as to get a broader angle of vision. It was just possible, she thought, that this might be the arriving house-party—though very improbable. She had watched so many of these parades since she had waited there at the Grand Central!

At the front came two men with suit-cases, scurrying across the vast depot concourse as if some momentous event depended upon their arrival. Perhaps, Faith thought, they were



trying to make a record-breaking trip around the world.

Behind these two was a man bearing three satchels in one hand, an enormous roll of steamer-rugs in the other, and a bulky fur overcoat thrown across one arm. With him, apparently, but half a dozen steps behind, was a stout woman with two bags and another roll of blankets, not to mention sundry wraps. She was trying frantically to keep up with the man. Evidently they were coming to embark for a European trip, Faith concluded, and were dreadfully afraid they had missed their steamer.

Then came two red-capped porters carrying an amazing lot of hand-baggage on their shoulders; and back of them a lady with two awed and hurrying children; and still further back another porter carrying a smaller child and a grip. The child was screaming in fright at the black face of its captor. Faith felt indignant.

Just then somebody from the waiting crowd



in the lobby sprang forward, and somebody in the travelers' parade dropped a lot of suit-cases and bags, and there was a great show of kissing and hugging. The parade was halted for a minute by the obstruction, but when it moved on again Faith saw something that caused her to elevate herself suddenly on tiptoe. Then she put up her hand and waved a little handkerchief, and dodged through the crowd, colliding with a fat man and narrowly escaping a header over somebody's satchel.

"Betty Fairchild!" she cried.

Miss Betty dropped her own bag on a man's toe, and hugged Faith. Then another girl, smaller than Betty, recklessly let go of a suitcase, so that it tumbled over directly in the path of the parade. But she let it lie there.

"Rita Maxon!" Faith cried.

There was more hugging, and the parade halted again.

But there was still another girl to come. She was larger than any of them, and she



carried two suit-cases. No sooner had Faith emerged from the second embrace when she flopped into the third.

“Esther Kendall!”

Esther, like the others, dropped her baggage. She couldn't help doing it, under the impetuous greeting of Faith. And now, with all the baggage in a heap and the parade completely stalled, Faith hugged all three of the girls again. At last the house-party had come.

One of the depot ushers came running over and moved the bags to one side.

“Please don't block the passage,” he said, not very politely. “Move along, miss! Just save a kiss or two until you get home. They'll keep.”

Faith retreated, casting indignant eyes on the man.

“The idea!” she exclaimed. “As if one didn't have the right to say hello to one's friends after a separation of ever and ever so long—why, it seems years! Oh, girls, this is the most terrible city—people, people, people



until you are sick and tired of them. One can't move at all without running into people. And they aren't polite people always. Most of them don't care one single little bit for anybody except themselves and—and maybe I'm getting that way myself. But didn't Kathryn Love come down on the train with you?"

"No," said Betty; "she came earlier. But she's going to be at the luncheon to-morrow."

"Porter, miss?"

One of the darky attendants lifted his cap and bowed. He, at least, was polite.

"Yes," said Faith. "I wonder if you can carry all this baggage. We want a taxi, you know."

The man gathered up all the bags and suitcases with ease.

"This way," he said, and they followed him.

Presently the four girls found themselves stowed away in a taxicab that was not any too commodious, with the baggage stacked up in front with the chauffeur. There was a crunching of levers and they were off.



It was early twilight, and the lights in the stores and on the streets were beginning to sparkle as they do at that hour. It was getting along toward New York's home-going hour, too, and the first detachments of the evening rush were abroad.

"Dear me, what a mix-up!" exclaimed Betty, looking out of the taxi window. "How do people ever straighten themselves out in New York and find out where they're going? It's a crazy-patchwork of people, isn't it?"

Betty was very fair, with a good deal of color, and her eyes were a deep blue and as bright as they were blue. Her hair was auburn—or some tinge resembling it, and now, with her tresses a good deal disheveled from the journey, many a stray curl protruded from under her fur-trimmed hat. She wore a heavy dark coat, also trimmed with fur, and gloves that were a little too tight for her, for she confessed that her fingers were cold.

"I don't suppose they ever do straighten themselves out," suggested Rita Maxon. "I



can't see that it makes a great deal of difference whether one gets into the right house or not, for all the houses are pretty much alike. I'm sure I shouldn't lodge at home more than one night a week if I lived in New York; the rest of the time I should be boarding around in the places I happened to get into by mistake."

Rita was a very attractive girl, like Betty, but essentially different. She was a pronounced brunette, with a complexion like velvet, black eyes that were soft rather than snappy, and fine, glossy black hair. Somehow, her clothes always seemed in perfect harmony with the Rita Maxon style of prettiness—and nobody could deny that she was pretty, and more. Now her black velvet coat with its upturned collar seemed to melt into her olive cheeks, and her little blue-trimmed hat set her off rather jauntily.

Esther Kendall laughed at this sally of Rita's, and answered it:

"I do hope we'll not get into the wrong



house to-night, unless it happens to be some place where dinner is ready and the people are expecting company."

Esther was different altogether from any of the other girls in the taxicab with her. She was more on the order of Leah Churchill—tall, inclined to be dignified, with large, classic features and a tanned face, as if she might have been much out-of-doors. Her hair was almost red and very heavy. She could have been called a "striking" girl in all truthfulness.

"If we were to get into the wrong house, or wrong apartment, girls, it would have to be very unusual if it could take care of my whole house-party without special preparations," said Faith, as the taxi swung around into Fifth Avenue and headed northward amid a most extraordinary procession of automobiles. "The four of us would swamp the ordinary apartment in this town—oh, our apartment is just an ordinary one, so don't get your expectations up. It's so tiny that I know you



will laugh till you cry when you see it, and wonder how in the world the house-party is going to live there.

"But we've arranged it all," she went on, "so don't worry till the time comes to sleep. I'm not going to tell you now just how we've arranged to do it—that's a secret, and part of the fun. If it were a great big barn of a place the house-party wouldn't be any fun—only we did have a glorious time out at the Worthington house-party near Fordyce last winter! But that wasn't New York. I'm just dying to show you how people live in New York; that is, most people. Of course there are very rich people who live in real houses, and very poor people who live like bees, in the tenements; but this house-party is going to live something like just New York folks, only perhaps a great deal better than the majority."

"Well, we are going dreadfully slow for New York," observed Rita. "New York has the reputation of being so terribly fast, but here we are—yes, we've stopped altogether."



"It's one of the crossing policemen," explained Faith. "You see, there are some people in New York who haven't automobiles of their own and don't hire taxicabs. Some of them ride in the subway or in the elevated trains, or in the surface cars; but a great, great many of them walk."

"I should say they did," opined Esther, looking out at the jam at the crossing.

"And if the policeman didn't stop the automobiles, everybody who walks in New York would get run over and killed—yes, they would! But here we go, and I suppose we'll not be stopped again for three or four blocks."

"You're a regular New Yorker already," laughed Esther. "How in the world have you learned so much in such a little time?"

"I've learned more than you think," pouted Faith. "But of course I can't expect you three girls to understand. With Betty from Boston and Rita from Atlanta and Esther from way off in Nevada, I expect to have my



hands very full. If you don't get your pocket picked before you go back to school Sunday afternoon, I'll be so glad. Whatever you do, don't buy any candy for little boys who look hungry—don't do it if you value your purse!"

Faith told them of her exploit, and then about Bruce Worthington, at which they indulged in a chorus of "ohs." They knew Bruce very well. Hadn't he been a senior the previous year at Top Ridge Academy, two miles from Fordyce Hall! And hadn't he been rather popular with some of the girls when he came down to the Fordyce receptions and other affairs! Oh, yes, Bruce Worthington was a handsome young man—all the girls conceded. Not only was he handsome, but he was very good company when he chose to be, and he had an exceptionally good voice for a serenade. So far as they could recollect, however, he had serenaded Fordyce only once, and on that occasion he and his comrades had picked out a spot under the window of the room occupied by Faith and Rita. But the



songs the quartet sang made it plain that Faith was the happy girl to be honored.

This recollection was now distinct in Faith's memory, so her cheeks were very red.

Then the taxi got out of the crush of automobiles, as it went along up Fifth Avenue; and presently it turned into Central Park and went flying over the smooth drives between the wintry trees. There was no snow on the ground as yet, but the great park seemed dreary enough under its electric lights.

The car stopped at length on Morningside Drive, and the chauffeur, jumping down, threw off the baggage and helped the young ladies to alight. Then the colored attendant from the lobby of the Morningside Building, resplendent in buff uniform and gold lace, came hurrying out to get the satchels and bags.

"Isn't he pompous?" said Rita, with a little toss of her head. "I suppose you have a whole army of these flunkies to wait on you here in New York."

"No," assured Faith; "he's the only one,



except Ann, of course. She's not a flunky, but our personal maid. However, you can get all the service you want if you stay at the big hotels. Some of them have a servant to every guest, on the average; but I think it would cost you ten dollars a day, anyway, and perhaps a great deal more."

"I'm sure I don't know where people get their money," said Rita, whose father was very well to do in Atlanta, but who wouldn't have cut much of a figure beside the New York millionaires.

Meanwhile a pair of very keen but tearful eyes was watching the little "house-party" as it left the taxicab and made its way into the building. These eyes belonged to Prudence Lane, on the fifth floor, back of a partly-drawn window shade.

The Lane apartment was on the outer side of the building, thus commanding from every room a view of the street. The room from which Prudence was looking had no light just then, so there was no danger of being seen by



the girls below. Prudence was not actuated by any spying motive; but, just the same, she wouldn't have been seen there for the world. She watched the four girls until they were out of sight, and then she watched the taxicab as it turned around and sped back toward the south. When it disappeared, she dropped the shade, walked across the room, which happened to be her own bedroom, and threw herself down on a couch, weeping.



## CHAPTER X

### STOWING THEM AWAY

EVERY little detail of the arrangements for this wonderful week-end had been done under Faith's personal supervision, even to the dusting, window-washing, and such important trifles as the cleaning of the tiny gas range in the kitchenette. Aunt Abigail held this diminutive cooking appliance in high disdain, accustomed as she was to the great coal range at "The Oaks," but Faith, more susceptible to change of environment, had fallen in with it splendidly. Already she could bake the flakiest of biscuits in the funny little oven, and concoct upon the small burners the most delicious of things. At the Morningside School of Domestic Arts she was progressing wonderfully well in cookery and general household procedures.

Ann, too, fell in with the spirit of the week-



end, and took orders from Faith with a sort of benign condescension. Faith could handle her where Aunt Abigail could not. As for Aunt Deborah, she was content to let the others do most of the kitchen work, for her sister complained of her cooking and freely observed that she spoiled everything she undertook. Besides, Aunt Deborah was free to confess that when it came to cooking, Faith was a veritable little wizard. Neither Aunt Abigail nor Ann could compare with her at all.

The dinner, therefore, went off very well, notwithstanding the cramped dining-room—which wasn't much bigger than that first dining-room down on Seventy-ninth Street. Faith had arranged the silver, linen and flowers as well as any one possibly could, considering the dimensions of the table. The four girls and the two old ladies touched elbows all around, and Ann had to keep tight against the wall, especially when she passed behind Miss Deborah's chair.

The oysters were chilled just right, the soup



was perfect, and the crown roast tender and juicy. The only hitch was the salad. Faith had practiced on this in advance, as she had on most of the dishes; but at the time she tried out a preliminary salad Ann was out for the evening and hadn't seen how it was done.

Before going to the Grand Central Station to meet the girls, Faith had arranged the salad fruit daintily on crisp lettuce leaves, and prepared the mayonnaise and whipped cream. But when Ann served the salad Faith saw that she had chopped the whole thing and mixed it thoroughly.

"Oh, Ann!" she said, reprovingly. "You've gone and spoiled the salad! It shouldn't have been chopped at all. The mayonnaise should have gone on first, and then the whipped cream—I'm sure it would have been just delicious."

Ann looked blank for a moment.

"I guess it don't be no hurt," she said. "You no tell it me."

Faith had made and packed the mousse



herself, and the cake was delicious ; so, all in all, the house-party, as Faith persisted in calling it, began very well.

Betty, who was not much of a cook herself, and who confessed that she didn't like house-work, was rather extravagant, nevertheless, in her comments on the progress Faith had made in domestic arts.

"You always were a wizard in doing things," she observed. "I am sure I could never learn to get up a dinner like this if I tried for a year."

"Now, Betty, don't attempt to make me vain," protested Faith. "This is just a simple little dinner, I'm sure ; and, moreover, I didn't get it up all by myself. Ann is very good at such things. But I'm sure I could do it if I had to. And I do feel, girls, that I'm learning splendid things at school. You know, our school teaches the real practical things, with just enough science, and not any more."

"A very little would be enough for me,"



laughed Betty. "I don't like science any better than I like making bread."

"Well," said Faith, "one must have some science—even in the laundry, you know."

"Ugh!" Betty exclaimed. "I do detest laundries!"

"Why, how foolish!" Faith exclaimed. "Our laundry is wonderfully interesting. We learn the most fascinating things you could imagine. Take soaps, for instance. We study different kinds, and learn what they are made of, and how they affect different kinds of material. It would amaze you to discover what horrible things are in some soaps, and just what those horrible things do to fine clothes. And then there is starch. It's a study all by itself—and bluing, and bleaching agents of different kinds. We learn how to take out ink and grease spots and mold and such things."

"That is very nice when somebody else does the actual washing," commented Rita.

"Oh, but we do the washing ourselves,"



Faith informed them. "Yes, indeed! We really do. We don't have any fancy frills at our school. But of course there are so many of us that the work is just fun."

"Ugh!" repeated Betty, shuddering.

"We do the ironing, too—and there is more science to that than one might imagine."

"I've done many a washing and ironing," said Esther.

"I haven't," declared Betty; "and I hope I never shall. I should prefer cooking to washing and ironing, if I were to choose between two evils."

"Cooking is simply lovely," laughed Faith. "Of course we had quite a little of that up at Fordyce; but here in New York we have less of the fundamentals and chemistry, and more of the actual cooking. We go in for the economies rather strongly—making things go farther. We learn how to cook the things right; but we learn combinations, too, that are tasty, and we plan meals that have different nutritive values. The advanced classes



take up the fancy things and invalid cookery. I'll get to that later on."

"Deliver me from invalids," sighed Betty.

"It is very useful to know how to cook for sick people—and for old people," returned Faith, gently. She was thinking of her grandaunts.

There was a little silence after this, during which Aunt Deborah looked at Aunt Abigail, and Aunt Abigail at Aunt Deborah. Then both of them looked at Faith. Miss Deborah smiled indulgently; but Miss Abigail was inscrutable, as usual.

"Best of all," the girl went on, "I like home management. That includes so many things that I couldn't begin to tell you half of them. Really, I had no idea there were so many things one might learn. Of course most of the things are done every day by everybody who keeps house, but usually they aren't done right. It's bad management that makes the meals late and the bills high and the food bad, and all such things."



"Perhaps I'll learn to do things some time," pouted Betty.

After the last course was disposed of the girls turned in to help Ann with the dishes ; but with five of them in the kitchenette the crush was quite overwhelming. Ann finally lost her patience.

"What you think it I am?" she demanded. "You go out and I do it in a few whiles myself!"

So they left the funny maid alone, but Rita nearly had a fit trying to suppress her laughter. After the work was done, however, they went back to the kitchenette and Faith showed them how to pop corn on the toy stove. Betty was pouring melted butter over a pan of crisp flakes when the door-bell rang.

Faith herself went to the door—and admitted Bruce Worthington and his mother. Out in the kitchen there was a sudden primping party ; but there wasn't much chance to discard aprons and tidy up tresses before Bruce himself peeked in at the door.



"Pop-corn !" he said. "I smelled it down in the elevator."

"Visitors are supposed to stay in the parlor," said Betty.

"I see several visitors in the kitchen," retorted the boy, stepping inside and sniffing, with a pleased smile. "Say, but you've got a great kitchen here ! Thanks ; I don't care if I do."

He helped himself to a sauce-dish, scooped it full of pop-corn from the pan, and filled his mouth.

"Keep your seats," he said. "I don't care to sit down."

This was just a pleasantry, for there was no place in the kitchenette to sit upon, except the gas range or the closed top of the little laundry tubs—doing its duty as a table.

"Perhaps the little boy would like some mousse," suggested Rita, with a roguish smile. "Wasn't there some of it left?"

Faith was still in the living-room with her aunts and Mrs. Worthington, so Esther got



out the remains of the ice-cream and dished it up for the young gentleman. He made short work of it.

"I'm sorry I didn't know about this affair before," he said. "I'd have come around earlier. How long has this been going on?"

"If you mean the week-end," answered Betty, "it began about three hours ago. You did very well in getting here. You know it isn't polite to come too early—especially when one is not invited."

Betty felt especially privileged with Bruce, because she had known him all her life. Before moving to New York, the Worthingtons had been neighbors of the Fairchilds in Boston. Bancroft Fairchild, Betty's brother, was Bruce's most intimate chum at Yale.

"I was invited," declared the boy. "Didn't Faith ask my mother and me to come any old time?—and any old time is to-night. Thanks; I'll take some more pop-corn."

"You can have all you want," said Betty; "only don't be a pig and make yourself sick."



Faith appeared at this juncture.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she said, "you are all invited into the living-room to meet Mrs. Worthington. Never mind the aprons—I've still got mine on, you see. For mercy sake, what has become of all the pop-corn?"

"Pop-corn?" inquired Bruce, blandly, slipping his dish out of sight back of him. "Has there been any pop-corn around?"

"Bruce Worthington, you're a great big fraud!" Faith declared, recovering the dish. "But of course you're welcome to the pop-corn. We can pop some more, can't we, girls?"

"A bushel," said Esther, gravely. "We'll need that much, at least."

"Fine!" exclaimed the young man. "A bushel will be great. But say, girls, I'll make it all right with you. What is the house-party going to do to-morrow?"

"Well," said Faith, "we expect, first of all, to eat breakfast. Second, we are going to take a walk; and probably we shall ride down Fifth Avenue on the roof of a motor-bus.



Then we shall do some shopping. Next, we are to have luncheon at Delmonico's—Delmonico's, mind you! Esther is giving the luncheon for us—isn't it splendid of her? Kathryn Love is to be there. That is splendid, too, considering the fact that she wasn't invited to the house-party. But of course Kathryn lives in New York, and the house-parties she gives are really house-parties. She knows that I'd have loved dearly to have her here with the girls; but one can get only so many sardines into a can. I shall have to do my entertaining in installments. Well, let me see! After the luncheon we expect to come back here to the sardine box and dress for dinner. We're invited to dine at Kathryn's house. Then, after dinner, Mr. Love has invited all of us to the theater; and after that, we're coming back again to the sardine box. Now I think I've told you all the things on the programme, though I haven't a doubt there'll be extra numbers."

"I'll put an extra number on the pro-



gramme right now," Bruce returned. "I'll be around here at ten o'clock with the car, and we'll all go for a spin. That'll beat walking, or riding on top of a Fifth Avenue motorbus. Oh, you won't have to invite me to the Delmonico luncheon to pay for it. I've got a luncheon engagement of my own with one of the fellows from Yale. But we can have a couple of hours of it, anyway."

The girls looked at one another, and from the expression on their faces there wasn't any doubt as to their sentiments.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Faith. Then a serious look came in her eyes.

"I wonder if Aunt Abigail will let us go!" she said. "You know she has ideas about such things, and she doesn't approve of automobiles. We had so much trouble getting her to ride in one, because for years she had refused. But after Elder Beaconsmith's horse ran away and left her and Aunt Debby stranded out in the country, we persuaded her to come home in Mr. Fairchild's car."



That was at Chester, you know. Oh, I do wonder if she will let us go to-morrow !”

“Leave that to my mother,” advised Bruce. “She knows how to manage such things.”

When the kitchenette party entered the living-room they filled it so that two of the girls had to sit on chair arms, while Bruce deposited himself on the floor. Faith brought a chair for him from the dining-room, but he said he liked the floor best because chairs were dangerous: he had known of two that collapsed.

Aunt Abigail was very prim, but sedately gracious. Her old-fashioned gown of black grenadine became her perfectly, though she looked quite uncomfortable on the three-cornered chair that was one of the rented possessions of the apartment. On the other hand, Aunt Deborah seemed very much at home in the single rocker the room boasted. She, too, was old-fashioned enough—she always was. Faith had often thought it a pity Aunt Debby hadn’t married. More than once the girl had



told her what a lovely grandmother she would have made.

Aunt Abigail was telling Mrs. Worthington things about New York. If she ever got back to Chester again, nothing could induce her to leave it. She didn't like living in a row of Pullman berths, as they lived here in New York; and there was no fool like an old fool. She reckoned that both she and Miss Deborah had been old fools for coming. But of course it was all for Faith, so they could put up with it. Faith was a very good girl, with some silly notions, however. She would outgrow the latter, perhaps, because she had so many sensible ideas.

The old lady's face relaxed whenever she spoke of Faith.

Just then Faith herself put an arm around her neck.

"Auntie," she said, "Mr. Bruce is going to take us four girls for an automobile ride in the morning. He is to be here with the car at ten."

Aunt Abigail's face hardened suddenly.



Not only did she disapprove of automobiles, but of boys.

"It will be too cold for automobiling," she said, and her eyes roved over to Bruce, lolling on the floor.

"The weather man says warmer; and we have plenty of robes," he informed her. "The temperature was up to fifty to-day; it'll be sixty to-morrow."

"I do not approve of such expeditions," said Aunt Abigail, coming out squarely.

"But, auntie," pleaded Faith, still with an arm over her aunt's shoulder, "Esther has never seen the ocean, and Mr. Bruce has promised to take us out there."

"Boys are habitually careless," the old lady declared; and Bruce covered his mouth with his hand.

"My son is a very careful driver," interceded Mrs. Worthington; but the old lady was obdurate. Bruce looked glum and the girls were silent. Half an hour later, as the Worthingtons were leaving, Bruce's mother



got Aunt Abigail in a corner by herself. She promised to send the family chauffeur with Bruce to hold him in check, and to exact a promise of twenty miles an hour as the speed limit. If necessary, she would go herself as a chaperon.

The old lady capitulated when she felt Faith's arm going around her neck again. Of course she would not ask Mrs. Worthington to go, but she thought the chauffeur was an excellent precaution. There was no telling what exploits these giddy young persons might attempt. She regretted that automobiles had been invented.

By this time it was ten o'clock, and good form in the apartment-building prevented their playing the piano and singing, as Rita proposed. She was rather innocent of city etiquette; that is, of large city etiquette à la apartment. So Faith said they might as well make up the Pullman berths, or close up the sardine can—whichever they preferred to call it.



The bedrooms, judged by Chester standards, were very tiny, and the three of them—not counting Ann's—would not have equaled Aunt Abigail's room at home.

In Aunt Abigail's room here in New York the bed, dresser, two chairs and a wardrobe took up practically all the space. There was no closet and Miss Abigail's clothes, although not over-plentiful, were bulky enough for two such wardrobes. The surplus had to be hung on hooks on the wall.

Aunt Deborah's room—connected with her sister's by the tiled bathroom, was the same size; but the bed was a single one and the chiffonier and dressing-table were of a child's size—rather unsuitable and grotesque for Miss Deborah, but quite suitable to the room. The willow rocker with the bright cretonne cushions completed the furnishings.

Faith's room was "the cutest thing," as she expressed it. It was, indeed, cute. When her trunk was brought in the dresser had to be crowded along the wall until the closet door



would open only far enough to get through. And the closet itself was such a miniature that most of Faith's clothes and accessories had to be put in pasteboard boxes and shoved under the bed, along with two or three hat boxes.

While the girls were making their arrangements, Aunt Abigail came out in her dressing-gown.

"I shall sleep on the couch in the living-room," she announced, "and two of the young ladies will occupy my bed. It is freshly supplied with linen ——"

"No, indeed!" cried Betty. "You are going to sleep in your own bed, of course."

"I do not consider it proper to stow company away on odd pieces of furniture," the old lady protested. "I am not accustomed to inviting company and treating them as inferiors."

"But this is New York," reminded Esther, who was making up the living-room couch for her own use.

"In New York they have to treat company



that way," added Rita. "It isn't because they don't know any better, nor because they wouldn't like to do differently; but because when people live in New York they can't help themselves."

"When ever and ever so many million people live in one city," supplied Betty, "they can be thankful if they sleep at all. And if they invite company, the company may be thankful ——"

"I wish to occupy the couch," said Aunt Abigail.

"Now, auntie, you are going straight back into your room," declared Faith; "and you are going to stay there until morning. This is my house-party, and I shall treat it just as shabbily as I choose. When it goes away it will know more of New York."

She and Betty got the old lady by either arm and marched her into her bedroom.

So Esther, having made up the couch with some blankets and sofa-pillows, lay down to sleep. Betty and Rita took possession of



Faith's bed, and Faith—well, Faith, being full of resource, and physically small, found the Morris chair, beside Esther in the living-room, quite satisfactory. She let down the back and rested it on a chair, put some bathrobes under her to make it softer, and a blanket or two over her, and declared that she really felt as if she were in a sleeping-car bound for California.

“It's perfectly lovely!” she proclaimed, with a sigh.

And, in reality, it was welcome. The day had been full of work and excitement and happiness, and she was very tired. Yet, as she lay there dreamily drifting, she wondered how she should like the prospect of always living like this. New York was very wonderful, but she was beginning to know the great town; at least, so she thought.



## CHAPTER XI

### DOWN FIFTH AVENUE

FIFTH AVENUE was at its best next morning when Bruce Worthington guided the family touring-car down that resplendent thoroughfare. The weather man's guess had come true and the day was balmy and bright, with scarcely a suggestion of the near approach of winter—except the leafless trees in Central Park at the right.

Under the stipulations entered into by Mrs. Worthington on the previous evening, the hired chauffeur should have sat up in front next to the driving-seat, if not in the driving-seat itself. But no hired chauffeur was there. Faith Palmer sat there herself, while over in the rear seat were Betty, Rita and Esther.

"Bruce Worthington," Faith was saying, as the car came to a stop near Fifty-ninth Street



in response to the uplifted hand of the traffic czar on the crossing, "I'm sure it was dreadfully wrong of you to dodge your chauffeur this morning and leave him behind at the garage. It was really wicked of you to do it!"

Bruce laughed lightly, but perhaps a little nervously.

"My aunts would be dreadfully angry if they knew it," Faith went on, her tone tempered by a half-forgiving smile on her lips. Of course it was pleasanter not to have the chauffeur along, because if he had come she couldn't have sat up in front. She always loved to be there. "They would be dreadfully angry," she repeated. "They'd never let you into the house again!"

The traffic czar blew his whistle and Bruce threw in the clutch.

"Then I suppose I'd come by stealth, and you'd let me in yourself—quite romantic! Oh, I'd find some way to get in. You may look for me next Saturday night."



"Don't be too sure that I'd let you in," Faith said. Then she demanded:

"Really and truly, why didn't you bring the chauffeur?"

"Because I didn't want him," confessed Bruce. "It's more fun to run the car myself."

"Bruce and my brother Bancroft are two of a kind—I think that's what they say," chirped Betty, "though I don't play poker. Bancroft always leaves the chauffeur behind if he can possibly manage it. And chauffeurs really are a nuisance sometimes. I'm glad Bruce did it. Who wants an old listening piece of chauffeur-stupidity along with us?"

"Just the house-party," added Rita.

"The house-party and Bruce," corrected Betty.

"Ladies," observed the young gentleman under discussion, "I agree with you on the general proposition that there are times when hired men are nuisances. They are nuisances ——"



"When there are girls around," opined Esther.

"Such beautiful and charming girls as we have with us on the present occasion. But let us lay the hired man gently aside and forget him."

Faith was silent for a minute, for the affair seemed something like a fraud upon poor old Aunt Abigail. But there are some things one might better forget; so she proceeded to forget this and be merry again. Yes, chauffeurs were nuisances sometimes.

"Fifth Avenue is so wonderful!" Betty exclaimed, as the car rolled down the gentle slope of Murray Hill. "Did you ever see so many automobiles, and such furs and pomp and display? And see that victoria and those glossy black horses! I imagine it's the equipage of some old-time family that doesn't care for a car. Your aunts ought to have something of that sort, Faith."

"They never will," Faith answered. "They are too much set against 'the vanities,' you know."



"But you can get them to do anything, Faith. Why don't you try?"

"I hardly think I should want a victoria myself. If I were to have anything of the sort, it would be a nice, cute little automobile—of course not here in New York, but when we get back to Chester."

"And your Aunt Abigail would buy it, too, if you really made up your mind to it, Faith. She really couldn't help doing it. If only I could hypnotize my mother the way you do her, I'd have everything I wanted — Oh, girls, see that old lady wrapped in a sealskin robe lined with purple velvet. And look—over there in the automobile ahead! Isn't that a beautiful leopard skin?"

Whichever way they looked, they saw a living motion-picture of New York's riches. Automobiles of many varieties moved up Fifth Avenue and down it, filling the street from curb to curb. Some were great royal closed cars, but, since the day was so glorious, most of them were open, with tops down and



their occupants on full display. Rich apparel and gorgeous robes prevailed.

"It doesn't seem as if all this could be real, does it?" said Esther. "I can almost imagine we're in a fairy city, where everybody is rich and beautiful, where the stores are all palaces enchanted, and nobody ever has any trouble."

"There's a chap having some trouble now," remarked Bruce.

Somebody had knocked off an old gentleman's silk hat, as he crossed the street near a great marble club-house, and it had rolled under a blue limousine which had two servants in gold and crimson on the front seat.

"What a shame!" cried Faith. "And look—the car is going right along without even stopping! There, the car behind has run over his hat and smashed it!"

The automobile that performed this work of destruction was a green one with a rumble behind containing a lackey who, as Esther put it, looked as if he had been dipped into purple ink and then trimmed off with a few



other colors. But the car went along and the lackey never got down to pick up the remains of the hat.

"Lackeys never do that—not for anybody's hats except their masters'," laughed Bruce.

The old gentleman shook his fist from the curb; but nobody seemed to care. Faith looked back, feeling as if she ought to apologize herself. She wanted to shake that miserable fellow in purple, along with the chauffeur who had run over the hat.

"I've been counting the colors of Fifth Avenue," said Esther, presently. "I can count hats with red, blue, yellow, myrtle, orange, cream and brown."

Her glance roamed down the street, pausing here and there where the sun touched some glittering tonneau.

"And I think the automobiles are colored just as gorgeously," she went on. "Then look at the furs. Why, it would seem as if the whole Hudson Bay Company was out for



an airing, with its complete stock. What wonderful furs!"

"The more one sees of New York, the more wonderful it is!" declared Rita. "It's like a grand symphony, isn't it?"

But soon they came to the lower end of Fifth Avenue, circled through a little park, and lo! the symphony suddenly ended and a most horrible discord set in. It seemed as if they had traveled by magic to some old-world shore. The whole character of the city had changed. Mean tenement buildings surrounded them, and hordes of foreign-born people hemmed them in.

"Mercy!" cried Rita. "This can't be New York!"

A little further south they crossed over to the East Side; and now the girls gazed in sheer amazement. The roadway was filled with push-carts—each of which was a miniature store with dry-goods or groceries or general merchandise for sale—and it seemed as if a million children romped on the pave-



ments or rolled in the gutters. Solid rows of ghastly tenement buildings confronted them as they moved cautiously through the throng in the Ghetto, with family washings strung on the fire-escapes until the buildings themselves were obscured. Even Betty, who had seen more of New York than the other girls, had never dreamed of this. Faith was really awed.

"What a terrible place!" she said. "Do all these people really live here?"

"And a lot more besides," Bruce informed her.

"Then I'll never, never complain again about being crowded!"

The automobile traversed block after block, all just alike and all swarming with people from numerous climes. Stretching away at all the cross-streets were the same laundry-decorated, dismal rows of tenements, rising to the height of five or six stories. Here, Bruce said, the people really lived like bees—with no exaggerated metaphor to it.

But at last they got through it and climbed



the grade to the mighty Williamsburg bridge; and here the girls held their breath at the marvels that unfolded below them—the cluttered roofs of the East Side behind, the East River and its shipping far under them, and Brooklyn ahead.

“I think we have just about time to skim out to the ocean,” said Bruce. “You’ve seen the rich and the poor of it; so now we’ll shake ‘little old New York’ for a while and give an imitation of an automobile running twenty miles an hour.”

“Don’t go any faster than that!” warned Betty. “You know what your mother promised Faith’s aunt.”

Whether Miss Betty really meant this warning or not is problematical. She was pretty well used to automobiles herself, and the Fairchild cars were not in the habit of going at a funereal pace—especially when her brother Bancroft was driving.

“I’ll do all I can to hold the car down,” answered the youth. He turned his head and



winked. "But when a fellow is driving forty horses, you know—whoa, Bill!" he finished, and made a great show of drawing in his obstreperous steeds.

They whisked along through the maze of Brooklyn streets, and came out upon a broad boulevard where the forty horses behaved badly and showed signs of getting away. Then they ran through low and wide-spreading regions where lonely rows of two-family flats dotted the landscape here and there, and came at length to the great ocean itself.

To Faith and Betty, and in a measure to Rita, it was very familiar; but Esther stood up solemnly and gazed in silence at its mysterious stretches. Then she observed:

"How grand and quiet and awful it seems, after New York!"

"And how little one mite of a mortal is beside it!" said Rita.

"When that particular mite happens to be a certain young lady who lives down at Atlanta!" put in Bruce, thus spoiling the charm.



He took them for miles along a road that bordered the sea for most of its distance, but finally he remarked, as he turned off to the left:

“We’ll have to do some pretty fair hiking if we make Delmonico’s by one o’clock.”

The road led them straight into the interior of Long Island, but at first it ran through a marshy stretch, half water and half reeds and wild rice. A dismal, melancholy country it was, brown and bare and cold-looking. It might have been a thousand miles from New York, so far as appearances indicated.

“Do you see that smoke over there?” said Bruce, pointing. In the distance a thin line of haze trailed along the horizon. “Well, that’s a railroad train. We’ll be alongside the tracks in ten minutes, for we’ve got a straight run.”

“Twenty miles an hour!” said Rita, from behind her monstrous fur robe. It was cold out here by the ocean.

“Twenty miles an hour,” echoed Bruce;



but there was a trace of something else in his voice—perhaps irony.

Faith said nothing. She was thinking, nevertheless. But boys would be boys. Indeed, they wouldn't be boys, she reflected, if they always did what their mothers told them to do, and never did things they were told not to do. Besides, how could they ever get back to Esther's one o'clock luncheon if they didn't go just a little bit fast?



## CHAPTER XII

### THE MONSTER BEHIND

THE speedometer was covered with an edge of a robe, and Mr. Bruce so contrived things that it remained covered up. He was not overanxious to see it himself.

"Confound these horses!" he said, with a wry face, tugging at the wheel with a great show of strength. "Confound the beasts—they know they're going home. Did you ever try to drive forty horses, Faith?"

"Yes; and I drove them straight up a sand-hill, when they wouldn't behave, and stopped them. They couldn't pull the car up the hill—could they, Betty?"

She turned back to her friend for corroboration.

"No, Faith stopped them all right, and saved a baby who was down in the road. She



forgot to tell you why she turned the forty horses up the hill. Of course she took chances on killing everybody in the car, to save the baby—but we were all willing to be killed, every one of us.”

“I’m not willing to be killed to-day!” advised Rita; “at least, not unless some poor baby gets in the way. However, I don’t see any hill around here, so I think you’ll have to stop your horses some other way.”

“Whoa!” said Bruce, in a very loud voice.

But the forty horses didn’t “whoa.” They kept right on prancing. There was no wind except what the automobile created; but this of itself was a gale. In a measure the high wind-shield sent it off over their heads, and Faith, cuddling down in her furs, watched the road roll under the car, faster and faster. Like most forbidden things, this one was fascinating.

The railroad had seemed a dreadfully long distance away, but they reached it in an amaz-



ingly short time. Now they were headed straight for New York. The way was clear, with only an occasional automobile in sight.

In a few minutes the road crossed the railroad track, and Faith was a little frightened at the way Bruce made the crossing. But they could see pretty far up and down the rails, so there was scarcely any danger of trains.

"I do think you ought to be cautious," she said, however. "I'm sure these railroads are always dangerous. Do be careful."

"I've been running automobiles since I was fourteen years old," he laughed, "and I never yet ran into a train."

Just then Betty leaned forward from behind them.

"Bruce," she said, "don't go so dreadfully fast."

"Twenty miles an hour!" he answered, turning his head for a moment.

Then, ahead of them, they saw that the road recrossed the railroad track, just back of



a slight elevation of ground that hid the road-bed behind. Perhaps the admonition of the girls had had some effect, for Bruce slowed down to a very respectable pace before he reached the tracks. The highway crossed the railroad right-of-way at an acute angle, perhaps thirty degrees, and the automobile was going not more than fifteen miles an hour when its front wheels gained the summit of the slight rise.

Then, when the touring-car was almost upon the steel rails, a hoarse and horrible warning sounded in their ears back of them. To the four girls it seemed like the triumphant roar of some diabolical monster about to crush and annihilate them and blot the automobile from the earth.

Faith turned in her seat and looked back, and saw the dreadful thing bearing down on them. Never had a locomotive looked so big before; never had she seen one coming so fast, with so much steam and smoke encircling it. Fire was coming out of the smoke-stack



and the glare of the sun on its metal was blinding. The other girls were looking back, too. But not Bruce! He was gazing straight down the railroad track toward New York, and his fingers twitched upon the two little levers on the steering-post. He knew there was no time to get over the crossing. There was just one chance, and that was to turn abruptly upon the railroad right-of-way and race ahead of the train! It was a matter of a couple of seconds to be gained—just a twinkling!

One of the girls in the rear seat screamed. Faith was vaguely conscious of this, and of the second roar of the locomotive whistle that followed. She did not scream herself; her blood seemed to stop circulating and her lips were glued together. She simply sat there, looking back at the oncoming engine.

Then the automobile swerved to the right so suddenly that she tipped over in her seat and was tangled up in the furs for a few seconds. She thought the locomotive had hit



them, and she shut her eyes and clenched her teeth.

Then, somehow or other, she got her balance again and sat up, clutching the rail at her side and bracing her feet. The robe had dropped down now around her knees and a hurricane shrieked over the wind-shield and sent her hair streaming, for the little automobile bonnet she had worn was adrift and held by one ribbon. She knew the train hadn't hit them, for Bruce still sat beside her, at the wheel, very rigid and silent; and the automobile was going—how fast she had no idea, but certainly more than the stipulated twenty miles an hour. She didn't care now how fast it went—fifty, a hundred, a thousand miles an hour wouldn't be a bit too fast! No matter what Mrs. Worthington had promised Aunt Abigail! No matter if Bruce had storied to her and tried to make her believe he hadn't been going faster than twenty miles an hour. No matter about anything, if only he would make the automobile go just as fast



as it possibly could go—and keep it going until it got far ahead of the train !

Faith took it all in at a glance. They were shooting down the railroad track with the train at their heels, so close that she could feel the heat from the engine. It was dreadfully rough riding, over the ties, but she liked it, she was sure she did. Of course she had to hang on and brace herself very firmly, but she didn't mind the bouncing. It was better than being smashed into smithereens.

Then suddenly the hot feeling at her back subsided, and, somehow, she knew the race was won. With an effort she turned her head again—the engine was losing rapidly. Inside the cab window she saw a man waving his hand at her and she thought he was shouting, though she couldn't hear anything except the roaring and crunching and hissing.

Just then something snapped under them and the automobile seemed to flatten. It rebounded, flattened again, snapped the second time, and—stopped !



Bruce sat stock still for a few seconds. Then he turned slowly in the driving-seat and looked back.

"Twenty miles an hour!" he said, rather huskily. "You can tell your aunts that I had to go faster than that—and I guess they won't care if I did."

"And your brain worked faster than that, too!" said Faith, with a queer, faint note in her voice.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE UNFRIENDLY CAR

FAITH was very glad to get on the ground once more, and so were the other girls. It really seemed as if the smoking monster a little way up the track might get them yet.

The conductor of the train, however—and the engineer, too—seemed to prefer to have the automobile out of the way before going on ; so Bruce got back on the driving-seat and managed the steering-wheel while the men of the train crew, assisted by some of the passengers, pushed the disabled car off the track and down alongside the fence. It was hopelessly out of commission, for all it would do, in response to Bruce's coaxings, was to emit angry explosions that frightened the girls half out of their wits.



"You don't need to 'whoa' your forty horses any more," Faith observed, with a touch of her normal spirits. "Do you think they will stand here without hitching?"

Bruce looked at her with a rueful face.

"I'm up against it," he confessed. "I'll hear from my dad, you can bet! But you girls had better jump on the train and ride into New York. I'll manage things somehow."

"The idea!" exclaimed Betty. "And leave you here alone!"

"Of course not!" agreed Rita. "Wouldn't we be fine girls to do that?"

"We'll stay; indeed we will," said Faith. Esther made the point unanimous.

The conductor offered to take them, but they stood united in the refusal; so he took their names, because he said the rules of the company required it. He also set down the number of the automobile. Then the train rolled away, many of the passengers waving handkerchiefs at the girls down there in the



ditch. With rather melancholy faces they let their own handkerchiefs flutter for a minute in return.

“You might better have gone,” said Bruce; “but you were bricks, to stand by a fellow. I don’t know just how I’d have managed things here by myself. If I left the car to go for help, some kind gentleman no doubt would have stolen all the robes—and I suppose they are worth quite a bit of money; and probably some other kind friend would have taken the lamps; and somebody else the tools, et cetera.

“Now I’ll tell you the best thing to do,” he continued. “There’s a trolley line that runs a mile and a half from here, over there to the west. It’s about the only chance you have of getting back to New York, anyway. Probably you’ll not have to go far on the trolley before you strike a telephone, and you can drop off, wait for the next car, and call up the ‘Bridge’ garage in Jamaica. Tell them to send a good strong towing-car out here as



soon as they can, with two or three men to help get us off the railroad. And say ——” Bruce hesitated and looked rather sickly for a moment. “Say,” he went on, with a feeble grin, “maybe you’d better call up my house. Tell mother we’re all right, and ask her to send—send the chauffeur out to Jamaica with the runabout. Maybe he can help fix up the big car so we can get it home.”

There was a little silence. Then Rita said, rather pertly : “Chauffeurs aren’t so bad sometimes—are they ?”

Bruce shrugged his shoulders.

“You’d better hike along,” he said, looking at his watch. “If you start now and make good trolley connections you’ll probably strike the elevated railroad in Brooklyn in about an hour and a half. Then in twenty minutes you’ll be at Park Row, and you can get a taxicab up to Delmonico’s. You ought to get there by a quarter past two.”

“An hour and a quarter late!” pouted Betty. “But I suppose we ought to be thank-



ful to get there at all. We'll have to call Kathryn on the 'phone and tell her, or she'll be dreadfully worried."

They took their farewells, and Rita saucily observed, just before they started :

"We've had a lovely ride, Mr. Worthington ; thank you ever and ever so much."

"We've all had a splendid time," added Betty. There was a suggestion of mockery in her tones. "I do hope you'll invite us again."

But Faith was more considerate.

"I think you were wonderfully brave," she said. "If you hadn't been, I suppose every one of us would have been dead this minute, and the automobile smashed to splinters ; and the newspapers would have our pictures—and—and I don't see how you ever managed to think how to do it so quickly !"

"I hope you'll tell that to my dad," said Bruce. "If you don't, I suppose he'll cut off all my spending money for six months and trim me down to a common boarding-house



up at New Haven, and spoil all the fun I've planned for the winter. Say!" he went on. "I wish you four girls could come up home for dinner to-night! Mother'd be glad to have you ——"

"Your invitation is too late," Betty told him. "Mr. Love's limousine is to call for us at six o'clock, for I told you last night that we were to dine at Kathryn's house and then go to the theater. But we'll write to your father—won't we, girls?—and tell him that you really did behave like a brave boy; and we're proud of you; and he mustn't cut off your allowance or put you into a bad boarding-house or spoil your fun, or do anything at all to you, because you saved all our lives. We'll write the letter this very afternoon and send it by special delivery, and every one of us will sign it—won't we, girls?"

"Every one of us!" Faith, Rita and Esther happened to say this in unison.

They followed Bruce's directions and cut across a stretch of open ground to a road;



and then, walking briskly, they made for the trolley line. It was a road that was much out of repair and quite muddy in places, and before long their shoes were in deplorable condition and their skirts and coats spattered.

"If only some friendly car would happen along!" wailed Betty.

Esther looked back, even as Betty spoke.

"Something's coming," she said. "It's an automobile, but it may not be friendly. Automobiles aren't very friendly, as a rule; at least, not here in the East. Where I live in Nevada, almost any car would go out of its way to give somebody a lift; but in New York the automobiles run over people's hats and don't even stop."

"And over people, too," supplied Betty.

They could hear the chugging of the approaching car, but for a minute it had disappeared back of some trees. When it emerged it was headed straight for them, and it really looked as if it intended to run over them if they didn't get out of the way. It was a big



car, with a chauffeur in front and two women in the capacious back seat.

Honk, honk !

The girls jumped aside just in time, Faith and Rita on one side of the road and Esther and Betty on the other. Faith landed in the very middle of a mud-puddle, and felt the slimy water oozing into one shoe. Betty went down on one knee in the dirt.

"Of all things !" cried Rita, in hot indignation. "Did any one ever see such impudence ?"

"The wretches !" exclaimed Esther, her eyes blazing.

"Oh, oh-h ! if only I had those people by the neck I'd twist and twist and twis-s-st !" was Betty's contribution to the general wrath.

Faith was still standing in the mud-puddle, gazing after the vanishing car.

"For mercy sake, Faith Palmer," Betty cried, "get out of that pool of ink !—Why, what's the matter ?"

There was a singular look on Faith's face.



She stepped on to dry ground. Then she pointed in the direction the car had gone.

“Do you know whose car that was?”

“Whose?” they all asked.

“The Lanes’! And that was Prudence and her mother in the back seat!”

The four girls stood regarding one another in fresh surprise, which changed very rapidly into vigorous resentment toward the Lanes, of whom Faith had told her three companions.

“Are you sure?” Betty demanded.

“Positive. Furthermore, they recognized me. I caught Mrs. Lane’s eye as they shot past. Oh, the vixen! How in the world Prudence came to have such a mother is more than I can understand—and such a pretty girl, too!”

“I shouldn’t call her pretty, even if she were a Venus,” Betty declared. “She isn’t pretty—she can’t be! No girl could be pretty and try to run down four other girls, and then go by like a railroad train without stopping to see if any one was hurt!”



"And without asking us if we wanted a ride!" said Esther.

"Especially after she had recognized us—or, at least, recognized Faith!" snapped Rita.

It took them several minutes to get their breath and composure back, and then they went along on their way, walking faster than ever to make up for the time they had lost. The things they said about the Lanes, as they walked, would have made the ears of Miss Prudence and her mother tingle could they have heard. Nor did Papa Lane escape.

When they came within a few hundred yards of the tracks, a trolley car dashed out of a cut, going at full speed in the direction they wanted to go.

"Run, girls, run!" shouted Esther, and was off in a mad dash to catch the car. She was athletic and could do things of this sort in an emergency. She ran like a professional and gained the track just in time to jump into the middle of it and wave her arms like a jumping-jack for it to stop.



The motorman probably had been enjoying the sprint, after the fashion of motormen, and probably contemplated going along merrily on his way without undergoing the inconvenience of stopping. But now, confronted by the apparent alternative of running over a young lady, he executed some quick maneuvers and the car came to a sudden standstill. In this he was more considerate than the Lane chauffeur had been.

"Come on, girls—run!" cried Esther.  
"I'll hold the car—only run!"

As if they weren't running!

"I could—couldn't run any fast—faster if I nev—never caught an old car!" panted Betty, who came in second best, her hair falling down her back and a fur collar trailing along in the dirt behind her.

"Oh, I—I've breathed up all—all the air!" gasped Faith, who arrived next, her hat askew and her heavy coat half off one shoulder.

As for poor Rita, who finished about a minute behind Faith, she had nothing to say



—for the reason that her saying powers were, for the time being, out of commission.

The conductor obligingly reached down from the back platform and helped the four of them aboard; and they sat limp and listless, not caring what the other passengers thought of them.

But presently they came to some scattering houses and stores, and Faith suddenly remembered.

“Oh, girls!” she said, sitting straight up.  
“The telephone!”

The car had started, but they cornered the conductor and made him stop it; and off they flopped, leaving the onlookers to guess as they chose.

They had plenty of time to send all the messages, and fifteen minutes to spare, before the next car came along. After that the ride seemed endless, but they reached the “L” at last; and finally Park Row, at the Manhattan terminus of Brooklyn Bridge; and ultimately emerged from a taxicab in front of the Del-



monico establishment on Fifth Avenue. It was ten minutes to three.

Then, a minute later, in a reception-room of soft magnificence, they confronted Miss Kathryn Love—a guest for the luncheon and their hostess for dinner later on. A most wondrous young lady she was. Kathryn was growing more beautiful every day, people said. Like Rita, she was very much of a brunette, with a perfect skin and very black eyes and hair. But Kathryn was almost a head taller than Rita, and quite imposing. She was nearly as tall as Esther; but the latter never had been especially graceful, while Kathryn possessed a subtle ease that marked every movement and gave her a distinction all her own. Some day, her admirers said, she would be a veritable queen in society. As yet she was only eighteen. She looked twenty in her close-fitting dress of Russian green velvet.

“Oh, Kathryn!” cried Betty—these two girls were roommates and chums at Fordyce Hall—“oh, Kathryn, we look like frights,



I know, but we're alive, thank Providence! We're alive, if we are torn to pieces and covered with mud and half dead from excitement, and nearly starved. And we got here just as soon as we could, and it isn't our fault if we are two hours late."

"Of all the awful rides!" cried Rita. "I shall never go out with that boy again—never. Bumpty bump down a railroad track with an engine chasing us at a hundred and fifty miles an hour. Bumpty pumty, rackity backity ——"

"Especially 'backity'!" interrupted Esther. "My back feels like it this minute."

"But the engine might have jarred your back worse," said Faith, rising to Bruce's defense.

"Well," resumed Betty, "we didn't tell you all of it over the 'phone, Kathryn. We were not only chased by an engine, but almost run into by an automobile—after we'd got away from the engine and were hiking home on our feet. And whose automobile do you suppose it was?"



Kathryn guessed half a dozen, and then gave it up. Betty told her; and all the girls sat down and looked at each other.

"Something has got to be done to those Lanes," Kathryn observed. "I propose that we all call on them in a body to-morrow morning and tell them, in plain English, what we think of them."

There were vociferous approvals; but Faith jumped to her feet.

"No," she said; "please don't do anything of the sort. That would be dreadful. Let's forget them."

"Well," said Esther, more philosophically, "let's fix ourselves up as best we can, girls, and we'll have just a little something to eat."

"Yes," said Betty; "and then we must hurry back to the house-party headquarters and put on our duds for the dinner festivities. It's a gay life here in New York."



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MAN IN THE LOBBY

It was a quarter past eleven that night when the house-party alighted from the Love automobile, which had brought the four girls home from the theater. Four very tired girls they were, too.

To Faith the day seemed a strange and weird dream, now that it was at last over. She never remembered a day in which so much had happened. Surely, she reflected, enough had occurred without the dinner at the Love mansion on Madison Avenue and the play afterward; but when these events were added, the whole made her almost dizzy in the contemplation.

And certainly the contrasts had been grotesque. As the limousine brought them home from the theater, Faith had mentally run through some of them. Perhaps the contrast



that struck her most forcibly lay in the chasm separating the Ghetto from Kathryn's wonderful home. She pictured it now, this luxurious palace, and she could not even think of it without having a sense of height and richness and shimmering lights. She recalled it, in her weariness, chiefly in confused memories of carven panels, brocaded seats, tapestries, and polished floors. Of course Faith had visited Kathryn Love before; but on previous occasions the contrast had been lacking, for she hadn't seen the Ghetto until that very day. She had not imagined people could live in such herds or in such places.

Kathryn waved them good-by as the auto rolled away, for she had come out with them from the playhouse. Then they turned and climbed the steps into the Morningside Apartment Building.

"I do wish I had somebody to lift my feet for me," groaned Betty, as she half staggered through the double door, which Esther held open for her.



"You might as well make it worth while," suggested Rita, "and wish you had a kind fairy to carry not only your feet, but the rest of you. But of course it would require quite a good-sized fairy—you're so roly-poly, you know."

"It wouldn't take much of one to carry you," retorted Betty. "Any little old runt of a fairy could do it."

"But I don't see where that hall-boy is," remarked Faith. "He is supposed to stay here till midnight and open the door for people and help if any one needs him. Dear me, I can scarcely carry myself, not to mention this heavy coat and these furs."

Very white and worn Faith did look—but charming, nevertheless, in her white velvet evening coat. Aunt Abigail had got it for her expressly for the Love dinner and theater party, for the old lady, having made up her mind back in Chester that her grandniece should dress quite up to the Palmer station, clung grimly to this determination. Miss



Abigail detested "show" as much as she ever had, and would allow no idle display in Faith's attire; but the girl had clothes that were "fit for her," as her aunt said. Yes, sure enough, she did have, and plenty of them. She often wondered if she herself were really fit for all the money the old ladies lavished upon her, and for all the undemonstrative but real affection they continually showed for her.

"I've not reached the 'last straw' stage of fatigue by any means," Esther informed them. "Here, let me take your furs and wraps, girls; oh, I can carry them all easily enough. Why ——"

Suddenly they all stopped short in the middle of the lobby, for a man rose up from somewhere, like one of those mysterious figures that come and go so amazingly in motion pictures. And now they saw that the colored hall-boy was asleep at the switch—the telephone switch—in the corner.

"I beg pardon," said the stranger, remov-



ing his hat with politeness ; " I beg pardon ; are you Miss Faith Palmer ? "

He bowed before Rita Maxon.

" No," said Rita, " I'm not." Then she added, on second thought :

" But of course I should like to be."

The man fell back a step, perhaps confused a trifle, and surveyed the other three girls as if in doubt which one to address. No one could have accused him of being an ogre ; indeed, he was quite the reverse. Instead of being old and ugly and like a Bluebeard, he was young and rather good looking. Moreover, he was even foppishly dressed.

Faith herself saved him the annoyance of questioning each by turn.

" I am Faith Palmer," she said, regarding him with some wonder.

" Ah ! " His eyebrows went up just a little in a pleased expression, as his eyes sought her winsome countenance. " I have been waiting here in the lobby quite a while to see you, Miss Palmer ; and, of course, to see your



friends, too. Let me see—I believe there is a Miss Esther Kendall of Vassar; and a Miss Betty Fairchild and a Miss Rita Maxon, both from Fordyce Hall, on the Hudson.”

The girls began to be just a little frightened. Betty commenced to wonder if she had committed any crime for which she might be lodged in prison; and Rita, as she afterward confessed, tried to peek under the lapel of the man's coat for a possible glimpse of a sheriff's badge.

“You seem to know us all, by name, pretty well,” said Faith. “I am sure we—we'll try to—to help you, sir, if you want help ——”

She stopped, not knowing what more to say. Very glad indeed was she that the other girls were there with her.

The young man laughed slightly.

“Which of the young ladies is Miss Kendall?” he asked; “and which is Miss Fairchild?”

“Will you kindly explain what you want of me?” demanded Esther. “I am Miss



Kendall, and here is Miss Fairchild." She touched Betty on the arm. "Now that we have introduced ourselves, be good enough to make yourself known."

Esther could talk like this when she chose, and she did it very nicely.

"Thank you," said the stranger. "I'll introduce myself—but just excuse me a moment."

Suddenly he stepped to one side, and instantly there was a blinding flash in their very faces. It was so quick that before they could move it was gone.

All the girls screamed at once.

"Mercy!" cried Esther, as a suffocating cloud of smoke floated upon them. "A flashlight! Girls, they've taken our pictures!"

Then they saw the photographer emerge from behind a pillar, and the whole affair was clear to them. Some newspaper had tricked them into identifying themselves individually, and then into posing, and the whole automobile episode of the day was to



be in print, along with their pictures. Doubtless the reporters had bribed the hall-boy to go to sleep, and ——

“Oh, how could you be so mean?” Betty cried, confronting the handsome young man through the thick vapor of the flash-light. “If my brother were here, he—he’d ——”

“If Bruce Worthington were here,” broke in Faith, “he’d smash up the camera, pictures and all.”

“It was a beautiful pose,” said the young gentleman; “and I’m sure you’ll like it. However, I’m sorry it had to be done, since you object; but it’s part of the game. The newspapers must have pictures, and they have to get them the best way they can. I might have explained the matter in advance and asked your permission, only I was afraid I’d have to argue it, and the hour is very late. Now tell me about it, won’t you—about that wild ride down the railroad track?”

“Not a word!” snapped Esther.

“Not one solitary syllable!” agreed Betty.



"Never!" said Rita, very firmly.

Faith added a decided negative of some sort, but the newspaper man was bland, even in the face of all this indignation.

"Very well," he said. "Of course I'd like your version of it, young ladies, and I'm sure it would help the story very much; but I have a rather full account from other sources. I've got the engineer's story, and the conductor's, and something from Bruce Worthington."

"What did he say?" inquired Betty.

"Not much—to tell the truth, very little. He seems to be a very modest young man. It'll be something of a one-sided story; but I've done all I can to give his side of it. Well, I think I'll have to be go ——"

"His side of it?" broke in Faith. "What other side could there be?"

The newspaper man paused. He was wise enough to know that he would get his interview with the young ladies.

"His side of it?" echoed Rita.



"Why, it was the bravest thing any one ever did!" Faith exclaimed, her cheeks glowing. She had forgotten about being tired. "It was the most wonderful thing! How could there be more than one side to it?"

"Don't you dare say there was!" warned Betty, to the young man.

"He saved all our lives," said Esther; "saved every one of us, and if that old engineer says that he was the one who did it, why——"

"The wretch!" cried Betty.

"The engineer tried to kill us!" vouchsafed Rita, in some wrath. "He ran his old engine as fast as ever he could after us, and almost caught us, and—and I'm sure he would have caught us if he could."

"But Bruce was too much for him," Faith asserted, with triumph in her brown eyes—and perhaps some pardonable pride for Bruce himself. "If that old engineer could run his engine half as well as Bruce ran the automobile, there wouldn't be so many railroad



wrecks and people killed and horrible things. It wasn't his fault that people weren't killed to-day — Ugh! I can see him now, back of his window, when he was chasing us. He was one of the ugliest men I ever saw."

"The mean old greasy-faced thing!" exploded Rita.

"And now," said Esther, "he dares to make insinuations against Bruce!"

"Girls," declared Faith, "we've got to tell the whole story ourselves, if we want it straight in the newspaper to-morrow."

Then, suddenly remembering something, she huddled all the girls close to her and whispered in their ears:

"Only don't breathe a word about the left-behind chauffeur, or about the twenty miles an hour we were supposed to go."

"Not one single whisper about it," agreed Betty; and they all acquiesced.

So the newspaper man got a most beautiful interview, in a four-part medley that was punctuated copiously with dashes and exclamation



points, and was full of interrupted sentences, and sometimes a bit tangled. Through it all Mr. Bruce Worthington figured as a gallant, a wit, and a hero of heroes.

It was the most spirited, delightful interview—so old newspaper readers said next day—that had ever appeared in a New York daily. And it pictured, in the most graphic of word photography, four amazingly charming girls.

As for the photograph itself—well, that was good; it showed four very sweet and pretty girls, but they seemed rather sober, even frightened.



## CHAPTER XV

### UP THE FIRE-ESCAPE

THE house-party was over and all the girls were back at their studies—Esther at Vassar, Betty and Rita at Fordyce Hall, and Faith hard at work in the Morningside School of Domestic Arts. But Faith was very lonely, and wished that house-parties might come every week.

It did seem as if the very bottom had dropped out of New York!

“How ridiculous of me to say so,” Faith remarked to her Aunt Deborah one evening, when Miss Abigail was lying down in her bedroom and the two were alone in the living-room. “I know it seems strange that I make such a fuss over three girls, when there are thousands and hundreds of thousands of others almost within reach of my arm. I



might get acquainted, I suppose, and know a great many, if I really went about it ; but that isn't the way one wants to get acquainted, is it, auntie ? It's the people one doesn't intend to meet, but does meet by accident or in one way or another, who are interesting. They are the people one wants to know."

"I have heard," observed Aunt Deborah, "that it is difficult to break into New York society."

The old lady smiled at Faith and went on with her sewing.

The girl heaved a sigh. She sat for a time with her book in her lap, reflecting. Then she asked, rather abruptly :

"Auntie, didn't you ever, in all your life, have jolly times with the boys and girls ? And didn't Aunt Abigail ?"

Miss Deborah dropped her needle and got down on her knees to look for it, but Faith picked it out of the mending her aunt had been doing.

"I declare, my eyes are getting wretched !"



sighed Miss Deborah, as she resumed her seat and her work.

“But didn’t you, Aunt Debby?” Faith reminded.

Miss Deborah put down the sewing this time and sat looking at the gas-log that stood for a fireplace. It wasn’t lighted, however, for Miss Abigail considered the expenses high enough without burning up gas, as she expressed it, in a good-for-nothing contrivance that wasn’t a grate at all, and whose only purpose was to help enrich somebody in New York—she didn’t know or care who. But now Miss Deborah looked at it, much as she might have looked at the big log fire at home when she wanted to gaze far, far back into the past.

“Girls should not ask such questions,” she returned, after a long wait, during which her grandniece watched her patiently from the uncomfortable chair at the other side of the little mahogany table.

“Why, it’s because I’m a girl that I ask!” Faith exclaimed. “Of course, I’ve asked you



before, and you'd never tell; but now I do wish you would."

"Why do you wish to know now, especially?"

The old lady was doing the questioning herself, not the answering.

"Well, just because!"

There was a slight flush in Faith's cheeks, and her eyes were a trifle brighter than they had been.

"'Because' is no reason," said Aunt Deborah. "And really, child, I wish you wouldn't bother yourself with such ideas. What possible difference can it make whether two worn-out old women like your Aunt Abigail and me ever had jolly times? Of what possible——"

"But did you?" Faith persisted, laughing.

Aunt Deborah turned partly in her chair and looked across at the girl. They presented a wonderful contrast, this pair, the one so marked with time and the other so fresh and half-blown and airy. It often seemed as if a



zephyr might float in at a window and carry Faith off with it.

"I hope," said Miss Deborah, "that you are not becoming frivolous, as your Aunt Abigail says. I trust you are not thinking too much of mere pleasures. What do you mean by 'jolly times'?"

Faith hesitated, and Aunt Deborah regarded her rather keenly.

"I hope, child," she said, "that you contemplate nothing that you are afraid to tell your Aunt Debby about."

Faith came around the table and put her arms about her ancient relative's neck.

"As if I could be afraid of Aunt Debby!" she laughed. "It's Aunt Abigail I'm afraid of—only I'm not much afraid of her any more. I'll tell you what I'm thinking of, auntie. Bruce Worthington says he's going to call on me next Saturday evening, even if he has to come up the fire-escape. You know I've never had a young gentleman call on me—just me alone! I'm afraid Aunt Abigail



won't let him in at the door, and that he really will come up the fire-escape! She doesn't approve of boys, you know; and since that dreadful automobile ride she will not let me speak of him. What am I going to do, Aunt Debby? What can I do?"

Miss Deborah looked very serious.

"Bruce is a rash boy," she said; "he is quite as adventuresome as Betty's brother Bancroft. Abigail has always disapproved of Bancroft, and she feels the same toward Bruce. Both of those boys have come near being the death of you, Faith; and both with automobiles!"

"But they never will again, auntie—never!" Faith assured her. "They have promised, really and truly, cross their hearts! Bruce says he'll never cross a railroad track again without stopping and looking and listening. And he'll never disobey his mother again and run away without a chauffeur when she has told him to take one. But really, auntie, don't you think he might call?"



She put her face down against the old lady's.

"It's not that I care especially for Bruce," she went on, with a little laugh to emphasize the disclaimer. "Of course not. But I'm a young lady—oh, don't say I'm not!—and it really seems as if I shouldn't be obliged to make young gentlemen climb up eleven stories of fire-escapes just for one little informal evening call!"

Miss Deborah's lips twitched and her old eyes twinkled.

"Faith Palmer," she said, "you are a most curious girl. But I suppose I shall have to get your Aunt Abigail cornered the first thing in the morning and see what I can do with her. She is very obstinate this evening, Faith, and I think we'd better leave her alone. Abigail is old, remember—she's eighty-four!"

"Yes, we'll let her sleep to-night," agreed Faith. "I think she's homesick—poor old Aunt Abigail! I wish you and she were



eighteen years old again, auntie—what a jolly lot of girls we would be! But I think I'll run into my room and write a line to Bruce at Yale, saying he can come by the front way—thanks to Aunt Debby."

"I think I should wait," said Miss Deborah, "until to-morrow."

"No," answered Faith, quickly; "the letter might not get to him then, for to-morrow is Friday, you know, and he comes home Friday afternoon. Besides, I'm sure you'll be able to fix it all right with Aunt Abigail; and if you shouldn't, why, I'll really have to speak to her myself. I'd much rather you'd do it, auntie, because Aunt Abigail is so dreadfully angry with Bruce over that automobile affair, and—and over the newspaper account. But really, the newspaper article wasn't so bad—was it? It said we girls were all—all so astonishingly beautiful, and Bruce such a brave young man—and the railroad ought to have had gates at the crossing. I think the newspaper was just perfectly lovely about it, and I



really don't see why Aunt Abigail should despise Bruce and hate him so."

Then she lowered her voice, bestowed an arch look at her aunt, and observed confidentially :

"Only I don't believe Aunt Abigail really does despise him and hate him—she just makes believe she does—so there!"

Then she went out to write to Bruce; but a moment later she came back.

"I forgot to tell you," she said, "that I've made up my mind to run in and see Brenda Castle on Saturday, when I do that shopping for you and Aunt Abigail. You know she is the girl who offered to loan me money to get home with the day my pocketbook was picked by that rascally boy. She was so nice and obliging to me, auntie, that I feel as if I ought to acknowledge it in some way. How would it do to take her some flowers—just half a dozen chrysanthemums or something like that?"

"I should think the flowers would be a



very graceful acknowledgment," agreed Aunt Deborah. "Only do be cautious, Faith, about making her acquaintance! You know what your Aunt Abigail says—and you've had a very good object lesson in this Lane girl, right here in the building."

Faith was silent. There was something about Prudence Lane that was still a mystery to her. That night she dreamed about Prudence.



## CHAPTER XVI

### A COOKING LESSON

FAITH took her aunts down to the School of Domestic Arts next day, and Aunt Abigail was not altogether pleased with what she saw.

"I can cook without so much fuss and feathers," she observed.

"Well," returned Faith, somewhat archly, "it is necessary in school, auntie, to have more fuss than one would really have at home, and a good many more feathers, too. That is how we learn to do things."

"I never had a piece of marble on which to make pie," said the old lady, with some sarcasm. "Neither did Deborah."

Aunt Deborah looked rather pained at this unfavorable comment on Faith's school. She was always pained at criticism of any sort—it didn't make much difference what the subject of it might be.



"Abigail," she said, mildly, "times have changed, you know."

"Yes," agreed Miss Abigail; "this is the marble age, as I am well aware. In my youth we got along without marble, and I have dispensed with it all my life. I never knew a person in Chester to refuse a piece of Palmer pie because it had not been made on a marble slab."

"Of course not!" laughed Faith, and some of the girls who were near joined, to Aunt Abigail's displeasure. "Of course not!" repeated Faith. "Good reason why nobody ever refused a piece of Palmer pie! You and Aunt Deborah could make delicious pies if you had nothing but a shingle on which to make them. But my cooking teacher says that old-fashioned cooking is almost a lost art."

"And will remain a lost art unless girls do more cooking at home, instead of gallivanting about the country to play at cooking in schools."

"Abigail," said Aunt Deborah, "you have



always been in favor of sending Faith to schools."

"I have," admitted her sister. "There is much good to be gained from schools, or I should not have permitted Faith to attend them. But schools can never take the place of home training."

"No, indeed," assented Faith.

"I am in favor of sensible, practical schools, and I had supposed this was one of them," Aunt Abigail went on. "But when I see such folderols as marble slabs I must doubt it."

"Abigail!" ventured Aunt Deborah.

But Faith merely took Aunt Abigail along by the arm. She knew the old lady's feet hurt her dreadfully that morning, so that she wasn't to be blamed for taking it out on the things that displeased her.

They were in a great oblong room, with gas ovens, electric cookers, tiled walls, cabinets, and an endless array of pots, pans and utensils of curious shapes and sizes. There were long, immaculate sinks, many tables



that bore a medley of food materials and cooking appliances, and here and there little rubber-wheeled stands laden with supplies.

"Isn't it a wonderful kitchen?" asked Faith, admiringly.

It was, and Aunt Abigail had never seen anything like it; but she was too old and too confirmed in her ways to fall in readily with this scheme of things.

"It is very unique," she admitted.

"And very interesting, Abigail," added Aunt Deborah.

"It is not economical," observed Miss Abigail, "whatever else it may be. I fear Faith will learn extravagant habits here, Deborah. While the cooking lessons themselves are undoubtedly good, the means employed are wasteful. Too much money has been expended in making this kitchen attractive, even luxurious. Who ever saw such a kitchen in real life?"

"But there ought to be such kitchens!" spoke up Faith, quickly. "Of course a home



kitchen would be ever and ever so much smaller, but it ought to be constructed like this one, and arranged like it—that is, in a general way. Auntie, that is something I mean to talk to you about when we get back home to Chester. Our kitchen, you know, is in need of repairs, and while we are about it, auntie, don't you think we might make it more convenient, and easier for your poor old feet ? ”

“ I want no play kitchen at Chester,” said Aunt Abigail.

“ No, auntie ; a real work kitchen, and one that will save us ever so many steps. But we'll not talk about it now. Here's a chair. Just sit down and watch the girls make the pies.”

So Aunt Abigail, with critical eyes, sat and watched.

The flour had to be sifted a certain number of times, the lard was required to be of a certain consistency so that it could be cut into the flour, and the salt was carefully measured.



Miss Abigail never sifted her flour more than once; and no matter how hard or soft the lard might be, she never thought it possible to use anything except her hands for the mixing. But here were machines for that purpose.

After the flour, lard and salt had been thoroughly mixed, ice-water was gradually added until a specified quantity had been used, and then the crust was ready for the marble slab. This, Faith explained, had been chilled previously, to prevent the crust from getting soft. Now the filling, of sliced apples, came along, and the quantity for each pie was carefully measured. Equal precision was used with the sugar and spices. Then, when the top crust had been rolled in strict accordance with directions, the pies were ready for the ovens. Every move was made with deft and dainty fingers, under the eyes of the instructress, who delivered a running lecture meanwhile.

While the baking was going on, the girls, Faith among them, cleaned the marble slabs,



washed and dried the utensils, and laundered the dish-towels.

"Now," said Faith, "we are going up-stairs to the lecture on house decoration and furnishings. Our lecture to-day is on pictures."

"Pictures are well enough in their place," conceded Miss Abigail.

"Yes, but so few persons really know how they ought to be hung and grouped and that sort of thing. I do wish you could have heard the lecture yesterday on draperies."

"We need some new draperies at Chester," said Aunt Deborah.

"And I have some of the loveliest ideas!" cried Faith, blithely. "I'm eager to get back home, so that I can do some of the things I'm learning here at school."

Aunt Abigail did not look enthusiastic.

"Then you know how dingy the wall-paper is in our south guest chamber," the girl continued. "Well, I've been learning things about wall-paper, too. I'm going to have the cutest design in that room! You see, there's



always a harmony scheme ; and if you don't know about such things, you are almost sure to pick out some wall covering that isn't artistically right."

"We have done very well with that wall-paper," said Aunt Abigail.

"But wait till you see that room after I'm through with it, auntie ! Esther is to have that room when she comes to see us, you know."

"I have no doubt," remarked Miss Abigail, with just a suspicion of a smile on her lips, "that when we return to Chester you will have the whole house done over, in imitation of this domestic school."

"No," answered Faith, laughingly ; "no, only part of it."

The old ladies went home at the noon hour, and Faith saw them well on the way. She did not trust her old aunts alone in New York any more than she could help. To her, they were just children, to be looked after.

The old aunts, on their part, considered



Faith a child. Yet, so Aunt Abigail admitted to her sister on the way home, Faith was developing character every day they remained in the city.

“I do not approve of many notions she has,” said Miss Abigail, “but she will make a most excellent housekeeper some day if she can rid her mind of marble slabs and scales for weighing the lard.”



## CHAPTER XVII

### BRENDA CASTLE

SATURDAY MORNING Faith went on quite a shopping expedition, to get household supplies; and along toward noon she stopped at a florist's and bought six enormous yellow chrysanthemums, the very best she could find.

Brenda Castle was just going to luncheon when Faith found her.

"Oh, what glorious blossoms!" she cried. "I never saw such beautiful specimens. For me? Oh, are they really for me?"

"I'll come in another time," said Faith, a little disappointed because her new friend was going out.

"Won't you go to lunch with me?" Brenda asked; and then something like apprehension came in her face.



"Of course I have to take my luncheons in a rather inexpensive place," she added, "and—and I'm afraid you wouldn't find it very inviting. But if you'll come with me, I'll be so glad."

"Of course I'll go," returned Faith, brightening. She was lonely enough to go anywhere, provided she could have some girl with her whom she liked. She did like Brenda Castle, although she knew her so slightly.

They went a block or two through the throng of Saturday shoppers, until they came to a stairway opening off a side street. And up at the top of the stairs they found a cafeteria, as Brenda called it, that interested Faith very much. It was exclusively for girls and women, and it was evident that most of the patrons were sales-girls and stenographers and women workers in various capacities of the more genteel sort.

"You'll have to wait on yourself," explained Brenda, and picked up a tray.

Faith did the same, laughing at the idea.



"Now just help yourself to anything you see on this counter," Brenda went on. "These salads are very nice, and the puddings, too. Then here are pie and cake—or perhaps you'd like some cold chicken."

Faith selected corn muffins, a glass of milk, and charlotte russe, while Brenda took cold tongue, potato salad and chocolate. They carried these edibles to a table, already well filled, and had a nice little chat, although a very public one, while they ate. It was all very different from the Delmonico luncheon she had enjoyed a few days before, and it set Faith to thinking more and more about the chasms that separate people in New York—just chasms of money. Brenda Castle was as much entitled to Delmonico's as were the women and girls who ate there, Faith told herself.

Brenda paid for the luncheon as they went out. Just ahead of them was a rather pompous young lady who had a dispute with the cashier over the amount of her check. She





“I THINK NEW YORK IS WONDERFUL”







hadn't eaten two pieces of pie, she declared, but only one. She refused to pay the three additional cents.

Faith and Brenda walked down Broadway a few blocks, and back again, for the latter still had a few minutes of her nooning.

"I think New York is wonderful," said Faith ; "but it does oppress one so terribly. I never really knew what it meant to be lonely until I came here, among all these people. Isn't that strange? What a dreadful tangle of lives—and lives that run so close to one another, too! Yet think of it—all these people, and we know nothing at all about any of them."

Just then an ambulance clanged noisily up the street, and other vehicles made haste to get out of its way.

"There!" exclaimed Faith. "I suppose somebody has been hurt. Isn't it a wonder we aren't all killed here in New York? I expect to ride in one of those automobile ambulances some day; I just know I shall."



"I hope not," said Brenda. "I have lived in New York since I was a tiny girl, and I never had to ride in one yet."

"Do you mean always to live here?" inquired Faith. "Always?"

The other girl smiled, rather melancholy.

" 'Always' is a long time, isn't it?" she replied. "But I suppose I shall have to live here always; at least, I don't see any prospect at present of getting away."

"Queer things happen," sighed Faith, who felt the tone of the other and knew that she was not happy. "One never can tell what extraordinary event will suddenly change one's whole life. Two years ago I didn't expect ever to live out of California—that was where I was born, you know. My mother died when I was ever and ever so little, and I don't remember her one tiny bit. You see, I just had my daddy, and I went to a girls' school, and thought I was happy until—until my daddy died too."

Faith's face was very long for a moment.



"Then I came clear across the continent to my old grandaunts in Chester, up in New England," she went on. "They are the only relatives I have in the world—at least, all I know of. I may have some twentieth or thirtieth cousins scattered about; but they aren't truly relations, are they? Anyway, my grandaunts were all I had, and at first they didn't want me."

"Didn't want you?" demanded Brenda, incredulously.

Faith laughed. Her spirits had come back, as they always did.

"No; not one bit. They'd never seen me, and they hadn't seen my father for twenty years, because—because they had wanted to make him a preacher and he had run away from the theological seminary. They didn't want to see him after that, his aunts didn't; and they didn't want to see me. Anyhow, Aunt Abigail didn't. The old ladies had been living alone at the old Palmer homestead—we call it 'The Oaks'—for ever and ever so



many years, with just an old servant named Angeline. Of course they didn't want to be bothered with a little girl—that's what they thought I was—and when I got there I was so frightened and homesick that I'd have run away and gone straight back to California if I'd had the money. I didn't have any money at all, and Aunt Abigail scolded me dreadfully because I'd spent dollars and dollars in the dining-cars coming from San Francisco."

"And your grandaunts want you now?" asked Brenda, with a good deal of solicitude. To be sure, Faith didn't look as if nobody wanted her. Very sweet and attractive she was in her brown corduroy suit, brown hat, and mink furs.

Now she laughed and her cheeks showed a trace of added color.

"Oh, yes, they want me now! I'm sure I don't know why, unless it's because they are tired of each other's company and I give them a rest. I never have been able to understand



just why they changed their minds and wanted me; but they did. Dear me, but I cause them trouble enough, and I cost them money—why, I haven't one solitary cent of my own, and it's really appalling the money they spend on me."

"You'll have it all some day, I suppose," said Brenda; "so why shouldn't they spend it?"

"Yes, I suppose I'll have it—though I don't want it! I want my dear old aunts. I hope they'll live to be a hundred. That's why I'm trying to learn something practical, Brenda—because I've got to manage things at 'The Oaks,' and take care of my aunts. And I don't mean to shut up the old place and draw all the shades and keep it gloomy and silent. No, I don't! I'm going to have it lively and bright, and entertain the girls I like, and—things of that sort. And I just knew that a winter in New York would help me to know how to do things. I'm studying housekeeping at the Morningside School



of Domestic Arts—we had ‘entertaining’ last winter up at Fordyce Hall, so I can get along here without it. Oh, Fordyce is a lovely school, and I learned a great deal there. But I think I’m really learning more here. Then, too, I like to study the people and the shops and the buildings—they all help, I think. I was a dreadfully green little girl when I landed in Chester; I just didn’t know anything at all. My aunts think I’m a little girl yet. But if you had seen ‘The Oaks’ when I went there, and could see the place now, I’m sure you would think I’d learned something. It was dreadfully old-fashioned, you see; now I’ve got it partly modernized—inside, I mean. I’ve studied and studied to do it, and I’m going to keep on studying until I get it to suit me. Why, when I went there, Brenda, the house was so dreadfully out of date and I was so dreadfully ignorant that I actually thought my aunts were poor. I went secretly and got the McAllister School to teach, so that I might help them.”



Faith paused, and a thoughtful look suddenly came in her eyes.

"Brenda," she asked, "did you ever teach school?"

"No; never. I'm sure I couldn't."

"That was what I thought; but I could, and I did. Why——"

Brenda interrupted with a sudden exclamation.

"Oh, I'm late—I declare I forgot all about the store! You've made me forget everything, Faith. I wish I could ask you to come and see me at home."

"Why can't you?" Faith asked.

The other girl hesitated. Her cheeks reddened.

"Well," she said, "I might as well tell the truth. We live in such a wretched little apartment, and so dreadfully high up, without any elevator, that I'm ashamed to ask any one to come. My mother and I are alone, you know, and mother isn't very well—and—and we have to live within our means."



"Of course! As if that were any reason why I shouldn't go to see you. I'm only an object of charity myself. And when it comes to living in a little apartment, and high up—wait until you see where I live in New York!"

Brenda laughed.

"We live in three rooms," she said; "and you'll have to climb four flights of stairs. But if you'll come to see me some evening, and stay all night if you can, I'll dearly love to have you."

She gave an address over east of the Park, not far from Third Avenue, and Faith wrote it down.

"I'll write you," she said; "and I'll surely go to see you—though I'm afraid Aunt Abigail won't let me stay all night. Besides, I scarcely think I ought to, you know. I have to take care of my aunts. It isn't as if they were at home in 'The Oaks.' There they'd have plenty of neighbors to look after them if they happened to need help; but New York is so dreadfully exclusive. We don't know a



single one of the fifty families in our building—not one. Isn't that a heathenish way to live? I'm going to get acquainted with some of them, too—just for the fun of doing it. I'm sure I don't know how I'm going about it, but somehow I'll do it. Dear me, I've talked all the time! It'll be your turn next. Good-by, Brenda—I have the address.”

“Good-by!” said the other, and she felt her heart sink a little. “Good-by; I'll surely look for you.”

Perhaps Faith was the sort of girl Brenda had longed to have for a friend, but hadn't been able to find in all of New York.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### TOO MUCH NOISE

THAT night Leah Churchill came in unexpectedly ; and she hadn't been there more than ten minutes when Bruce Worthington came—and with him was Bancroft Fairchild, Betty's brother. This, too, was unexpected, though Faith and Leah were glad to see Bancroft ; Faith especially glad, for he had given her many a splendid automobile ride up at Chester.

Bancroft was a larger youth than his chum, with tangled hair and a big, friendly face, full of fun. He was noisier, too, than Bruce ; and when he sang a comic song for the girls it seemed as if he would lift the ceiling at times. Faith accompanied him. She had learned the music for some of his songs in Chester when the Fairchilds were in their summer home there.



The boys brought along several boxes of candy, and this helped very much to make them popular. But Faith declared she was more interested in cake—though even when she said it she had her mouth full of confectionery.

“I can beat any fellow in college making cake,” asserted Bancroft, puffing out his chest.

“Bancroft Fairchild, where did you ever learn to make cake?” asked Faith.

“At a certain mansion in Chester designated in popular nomenclature as ‘The Oaks,’ ” he replied. “Can it be possible that you have forgotten the lessons you gave me, and the post-graduate course I took under your Aunt Abigail last summer? Since then, in secret, I have experimented and improved, as inventors say. In fact, I have invented.”

“Invented what?” Leah asked. She was a good deal older than Bancroft and looked on him rather lightly, as she might have regarded a small boy.



"Cake," announced Bancroft. "I have invented a new and extraordinarily delicious cake—a kind heretofore unknown and undreamed of. Ah, wait until you see this marvelous creation, ladies! Just wait! Oh, you will say that it is indeed a roaring scream of a cake!"

Both girls made a good deal of noise laughing, and Aunt Abigail called from her bedroom:

"Girls, there are other people in the building besides ourselves. Do not be so boisterous."

"No, auntie," Faith answered; "we'll try to be quiet."

Then she asked Bancroft:

"What do you call this wonderful cake invention of yours?"

"It hasn't been named yet. You see, any old name won't do. I have been thinking of calling it ——"

"Why not name it the 'Roaring Scream' cake?" Faith suggested.



"Say!" said Bancroft. "That's just the thing! It has a sort of appetizing sound, hasn't it? 'Roaring Scream' cake! Fine!"

"Why don't you make some to-night?" proposed Bruce.

"You can have the kitchenette," assented Faith. "What do you need for ingredients?"

"Sh-h!" whispered Bancroft. "That's the secret."

"Well," Faith went on, "you can have eggs and butter and milk and flour and flavoring extracts and jelly—almost anything you want."

"I need them all, Faith; but there's still something lacking. It's a peculiar chemical mixture, and I'll have to go down in some drug store and get it. Come along, Bruce! If they want to see some 'Roaring Scream' cake, I'll oblige them."

"At my school," volunteered Faith, "we learn to cook according to chemistry; but I never yet heard of putting chemicals into cake."



"That's my discovery," declared Bancroft.

While the boys were gone, the girls got out the supplies Bancroft would need for his most wonderful of cake inventions.

"Now," he said, when he and Bruce returned with some mysterious bottles, "I can't have any interference on the part of the ladies. I need Bruce to assist me; but remember that you girls are to keep out of this baby-grand kitchen, or whatever you call it."

Faith fastened an apron around Bruce, and Leah did the same service for Bancroft. Then the girls left the young gentlemen to their own devices. While they waited Faith and Leah sang, in the living-room, Faith accompanying.

It was a full hour before the boys opened the kitchenette door. Then the girls found the temperature inside terrific. The little oven was red hot and the room was filled with a heavy, smoky haze. Both Bancroft and Bruce were bathed in perspiration, and their faces and hands were covered with dough, the yellow of eggs, jelly, and other things.



"Mercy!" cried Faith, as she surveyed the room. "Leah, just look!"

It did seem as if every dish and pan in the apartment had been used. They filled the sink, littered the laundry-tub covers, and were scattered about on the floor. Flour had been spilled everywhere and the boys had walked in it. Sugar crunched under foot, and Faith nearly slipped up on some butter.

"Of all things!" cried Leah, in dismay.

"Oh, I'm glad my aunts have gone to bed!" exclaimed Faith. "I wouldn't have them see this terrible place for the world. I'll never, never turn boys loose in the kitchen again."

"Open the window," said Leah, "and let out this dreadful smudge. I'm nearly choked. Chemicals and kitchenettes don't go well together. Ugh! Isn't it dreadful?"

"But where is that wonderful cake?" suddenly demanded Faith. "Why, I almost forgot it!"

Bancroft was wiping the perspiration from



his face with the lower edge of his long apron. He was a woebegone spectacle.

"How can a fellow make cake in a kitchen like this?" he demanded.

"But where is it?" Faith insisted.

"It *isn't*," said Bruce. He looked very weary and disgusted, and his collar was wilted as if the season were July instead of November.

On the gas range, in an aluminum pan, was a smoking, crusty, black object, oval in shape and about an inch thick. It looked like a huge pancake that had been turned and returned on the griddle until it was cooked through and through, and then cooked some more.

"I believe this is the cake," said Leah, tapping the object with her fingers. It gave forth a sound such as one might get from tapping a cement sidewalk.

Faith took a knife and tried to cut it, but the thing resisted, with a metallic sound.

"It certainly is a 'roaring scream'!" she



said, convulsed. "Leah, do look at those bottles!"

Leah secured possession of two bottles before Bancroft could interfere. One was marked "Ipecac," and the other "Cologne Haute Saone Lilac." There was still another bottle, but Bruce got it and kept it away from the girls.

Both Faith and Leah ran out of the kitchenette, laughing wildly. Faith tried to restrain herself, but couldn't. She leaned against the hall partition and laughed until it seemed as if she should die.

Just then there came a loud rapping on the wall, from the other side of the partition. In this direction lay the Duffy apartment, where lived the quarrelsome, cross Mr. Duffy.

Thump, thumpity, thump, it went; and both girls suddenly ceased their reckless mirth.

"Hush!" said Faith.

The thumping was repeated half a dozen times; then it ceased for a moment, and was



repeated still again. It was evident that the Duffys meant the warning to be effective.

"The horrid things!" cried Faith, indignantly. "I've a good mind to hammer back, just to notify them to mind their own business. As if one couldn't have a little fun in one's own home—and it's only a quarter past ten!"

Leah laughed—this time very quietly.

"Oh, well," she said, "let them pound. This is New York, remember."

Just then out came Aunt Abigail, in dressing-gown and slippers.

"Now, auntie," said Faith, heading her off so that she wouldn't see that dreadful muss in the kitchenette, "don't you worry your poor old head any more. Go right back to bed, and we'll be as still as a dozen mice, all put together. The boys are going home pretty soon ——"

"It is to be hoped that they are," said the old lady, bitingly.

Faith got her back into her room and shut



the door. Then the girls took the aprons off the boys and made them go into the living-room and be very quiet.

"Leah and I really must clean up this frightful looking place," said Faith, "before Ann or anybody else sees it."

About eleven o'clock Leah started for home, with both Bruce and Bancroft as escorts. Faith said good-by in whispers, at the apartment door—very soft whispers, indeed, lest the great big bear of a Duffy should pounce out and bite off her head.



## CHAPTER XIX

### AN INVITATION DECLINED

ONE evening, during the following week, the hall-boy came to the Palmer apartment with a daintily-sealed note addressed to Faith. Ann took it, and Faith, who was studying a chart of food properties at the moment, opened it with some curiosity. Then her brow clouded and she bit her lip in perplexity and surprise.

“DEAR FAITH: [the note ran] I know you think I am perfectly dreadful, and I don’t blame you one bit. There are some things I should like to explain. If you haven’t anything else to do this evening, can’t you come down to our apartment? Father and mother have gone to a dinner, and I am miserably alone. Even Katie, our maid, is out. I do hope you can come.

“PRUDENCE.”

Faith read the note over half a dozen times, and the food chart slipped off on to the floor



of the living-room and was forgotten. This was a very unexpected turn of affairs, and the little appeal went straight to her heart. "Miserably alone"! Wasn't that enough to touch any one's heart? But she had a pretty clear idea as to what Aunt Abigail would say. The old lady's antipathy to the Lanes was very pronounced; and even Faith had to admit that she had good cause for it. Certainly the Lanes had snubbed the Palmers often enough.

Faith's first impulse was to go down-stairs without telling her aunts. She wanted to go very much, for now she was sure that the snubs hadn't been of Prudence's making. And Prudence wanted to explain!

But it took Faith only a minute to put aside the temptation to follow her inclinations. Even if she could find an excuse to absent herself for a little while, she knew it wouldn't be right. She had never deceived her aunts, and she didn't mean to begin now. Weren't they the best old aunts a girl ever had? Hadn't they taken her in, an orphan, and



given her the dearest of homes? Hadn't they given her more than she had ever dreamed of having, and done almost everything for her that she had asked? It was clear that they had the right to ask something of her.

It was not yet nine o'clock, but Aunt Deborah had gone to bed and Aunt Abigail was lying down in her bedroom. They were very old, these aunts of hers.

Faith took the note and stepped softly to Aunt Abigail's room.

"Auntie," she said, when she saw the old lady stir at hearing her footsteps—"Auntie, I have a funny invitation to—to spend the evening out."

"Not to-night!" said the old lady.

"Yes—but I should not have far to go; not out of the building."

"It is bedtime, Faith. Besides, I know of nobody in the building who would have the right to invite you."

"Well," returned Faith, "it isn't very late—and as to the right to invite me, why, I



suppose there are a good many people who might do it if they chose. Haven't we plenty of neighbors, auntie? And haven't we wondered ever and ever so many times how people could live in a building together and be such unneighborly neighbors that scarcely any of them know each other?"

"Who has invited you?" asked the old lady.

Faith laughed nervously.

"Really, the last person in the world we should expect to do it, auntie. Now I do hope it won't excite you, but I'm going to turn on the light and read you this queer invitation."

Aunt Abigail already gave evidence of interest, if not actual excitement. She sat up on the bed as her grandniece touched the electric button. Then, as Faith slowly read Prudence's note aloud, her face grew very stern.

"The hussie!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, auntie!" Faith said, reproachfully.



"The brazen little creature!" Aunt Abigail got up suddenly and towered above the girl, a picture of righteous anger. "How does she dare send such a note as that?"

"But you see it couldn't have been her fault, at all," pleaded Faith. "She wants to explain."

"You will have nothing to do with those persons," the old lady decreed, emphatically. "They are nobodies! They are arrogant, ignorant, display-loving nobodies, and I shall not have you associating with any of them!"

"But it is Prudence, auntie, who has written me this note. She is miserably lonesome—and we have been supposing that the people in this building didn't want friends! She does want them—she says so. There are people in New York who do want friends; I'm sure that most of them do. It is just because New York is so big and so queer, that they don't come out and say so. And even if her father and mother don't care to know anybody here in the building, Prudence does



—and—and don't you think, auntie, that I might run down for a few minutes?"

"Never!" There was no mistaking the accent. Then she added, with just a trace of relaxation:

"I have nothing against this girl herself, but her people are not the sort for a girl of your station to mingle with. Furthermore, I am surprised that you should wish to have for a friend the daughter of a woman who has insulted you and your aunts."

"But Prudence didn't insult us ——"

"You will have nothing to do with them!" decreed Aunt Abigail, rather harshly.

Faith stood for half a minute in silence, trying hard to keep back the tears. She knew very well that when the old lady was in such a mood the less said the better. And she had no thought of defying her aunt.

"Very well, auntie," she said. "I suppose you are right. The Lanes have treated us shabbily. We may not be as citified as they are, but at least we can trace our ancestry



back to distinguished Puritan families. I don't imagine they can do that. What kind of aristocracy is it ——"

"Codfish!" said Aunt Abigail. "Codfish aristocracy! That is the kind they belong to."

"And the Palmers are the real aristocrats, after all. Isn't that funny? Well, I do feel sorry for Prudence, and I'm sorry her people are so foolish. I never should have made any advances, after what has occurred; but since Prudence herself has made them, I should dearly like to run down and see her ——"

"She is a disobedient girl," interrupted Aunt Abigail, "even to ask you there when her parents are out. She does not dare invite you to go there when they are home. That is very wrong, even though the conduct of the parents themselves is reprehensible. You must not have any part in such disobedience."

Faith had not thought of this phase of the matter before. But Aunt Abigail's logic was undoubtedly right.



"I'm so sorry!" she said. "But, auntie, how shall I answer this note?"

"If you must answer it at all," said Miss Abigail, "you may say that your aunts disapprove of your accepting the invitation. There is no occasion to say more."

"Very well, auntie," returned Faith, and went back to the living-room.

There was a little *escritoire* in one corner of the room, and Faith sat down before it and wrote the note as Aunt Abigail had suggested:

"DEAR PRUDENCE: I am so sorry that my aunts disapprove of my accepting your kind invitation.  
FAITH."

After she had written it, she read it over a good many times, and the oftener she read it the colder and more hostile did it seem. She didn't want to seem hostile, for she did not feel that way in the least—not toward Prudence. So finally she tore up the note and threw the pieces into the waste-basket. Then she composed a second note, like this:



"DEAR PRUDENCE: I was so glad to get your kind little note, and I wanted so much to go down and see you. But my Aunt Abigail has very strict ideas about such things and would not let me. Oh, this is a dreadful world—at least, in some ways! But I love pretty nearly everything in it, anyway. And do you know, I was miserably lonesome in New York myself for a while, but now I don't feel so much that way. I wish some things could be different, but I suppose they can't be. I have to mind my Aunt Abigail.

"FAITH."

She read this note over, too, and smiled at it ruefully. It was a funny note, she admitted. Certainly it was unconventional. But at all events she had said what she meant, and if there was any virtue in the truth, the note ought to have it. She had told Prudence that Aunt Abigail wouldn't let them know each other, but she had told it in a way that would let Prudence know that this was not a matter of her own doing.

She folded the note, sealed it with her own little wax die, and rang for the hall-boy.



After the note had gone, she resumed her seat by the table in the living-room, picked up the food chart from the floor, and took up her study at the point where she had left off. But every bit of interest had gone out of foods. She couldn't fix her mind on anything except Prudence Lane.

Poor Prudence! The episode of the two notes seemed like a sort of little tragedy. She liked Prudence and Prudence liked her, but just on account of wretched old New York, they couldn't know each other. Because Prudence's father and mother had city ideas, and Faith's aunts were so old-fashioned and didn't patronize city dressmakers and such people, she and Prudence must be strangers. For a few minutes she was inclined to be angry toward Miss Helena Burdick, her aunts' dressmaker in Chester. Miss Burdick had been making their dresses for half a century or more, and no doubt she did have ancient ideas. What right had she to be making dresses at all, and spoiling things and mak-



ing people ridiculous when they came to the city?

But of course it couldn't be helped, Faith reflected, more philosophically. Her aunts would go on wearing old-fashioned clothes, and old-fashioned hats, as long as they lived; and it wouldn't make any difference whether the Lanes liked it or not. After all, the Lanes didn't cut much of a figure in the world—neither did Prudence.

Just the same, Faith felt very badly to think that now it was all over between herself and Prudence. There wasn't any chance of their being friends. The die was cast.

For a long time the girl sat there alone, thinking; and she had to keep brushing away the mist with her handkerchief—the obstinate misty dew that kept gathering in her eyes.

“Faith—what time is it?”

Aunt Abigail was calling to her from the bedroom down the hall.

Faith hadn't any idea what time it was.



She was amazed when she looked up at the clock.

“Why, it’s after eleven, auntie!” she answered. “I really didn’t know it was getting so late.”

“Put up your books this minute and go to bed,” commanded the old lady. “You will ruin your eyes and make yourself prematurely old with this night study. I do not believe in making young girls work half the night when they should be sleeping. Close your books instantly!”

“Yes, auntie,” said Faith; “they are already closed.”



## CHAPTER XX

### BREAKING INTO NEW YORK CIRCLES

DRIP, drip, drip.

It was in the middle of the night, and quite dark in Faith's tiny room on the eleventh floor of the Morningside Apartment Building. The street lights scarcely penetrated to that altitude, and there was no moon.

Drip, drip, drip.

Faith stirred uneasily, half conscious of some unusual sound. Then she lay still for a minute, then stirred again, then sat up in bed, listening. Surely, it must be raining in at the window!

She jumped up and looked out, but she saw some stars twinkling. It couldn't be rain. She switched on the electric light, and just then she felt a splash of water on her hand. Looking up, she saw a wet spot on the ceil-



ing, as big as a wash-tub. On the floor under it the rug was saturated.

Tiptoeing as quietly as possible, so as not to disturb her aunts, she awoke Ann.

"Get up, quick!" she whispered, with her hand on the maid's shoulder. "Get up; there's water leaking through from somewhere. Do hurry!"

"Aw-w!" grunted Ann, unbelievably. "Aw-w! what's matter with you? You be dream!"

"Come and see!—only be as quiet as you can. Aunt Deborah's back has been so bad all day, you know, and Aunt Abigail's feet have hurt her dreadfully. They need the sleep. But something must be done, Ann—look!"

They had reached Faith's room; and, sure enough, Ann saw the water.

"What did it was?" she asked.

"I can't imagine. Maybe it's from one of the pipes that lead to the tanks on the roof. Just look at it drip. Why, we'll be flooded here before morning. What shall we do?"



"I dunno," growled Ann.

Faith stood watching the water drip for a minute, her face very much perplexed.

"It'll run down through the floor and drown out the people beneath us—the Kelloggs," she said. About all she knew of the Kelloggs was their name and the fact that they had an old lady in the family as old as Aunt Abigail.

"Oh, who was care for Kelloggs!" sniffed Ann.

"Well, we can't be flooded away ourselves, anyhow," insisted Faith. "I've got to notify the janitor. But if I telephone down, I'll wake up Aunt Abigail and Aunt Debby—and after the time they've had to get asleep that would be such a shame. I'll go down-stairs myself, Ann, to the janitor's quarters."

"You better do be not," warned Ann.

"Oh, I'm not afraid. Besides, doesn't the elevator run all night? Of course I'll go. Do be quiet, Ann! I'll dress just as fast as I can, and you can run into the kitchen and



get something to catch the water in. I do hope it'll not get any worse."

Ann came back with a granite pail, and the dripping of the water made such a dreadful noise that Faith hastily put a couple of handkerchiefs in the bottom to deaden it. Then she stepped softly to Aunt Abigail's door and listened. The old lady was sleeping heavily. So was Aunt Deborah in the room adjoining.

She slipped on her shoes and put on a kimono and a long coat that covered her. Then she cautioned Ann to stay there and watch the water. If there should be a sudden flood she must arouse the aunts, of course, but not otherwise.

"I'll trust them to you, Ann," she said, solemnly, as if she were going on some dire expedition, and leaving almost as dire danger at home.

"I do be take care of 'em," Ann assured her, with equal solemnity.

Faith let herself out of the apartment noiselessly, and closed the door very softly after



her, having taken the precaution to tie the key in one corner of her handkerchief. The corridor of the eleventh floor seemed very still and ghostly, with the lights burning low in its dim recesses. Even softly as she walked, she seemed to be making a clatter on the mosaic floor. In the daytime or evening she never had noticed that her footsteps were noisy, but now she went clackity-clack, as she expressed it afterward. It frightened her.

She pressed the elevator button gingerly, and, far below, heard the jingle of the bell—so far that the sound reached her indistinctly. She waited; no response. Again she pressed it, this time a little more firmly; but still no sign.

The night elevator boy, of course, was asleep. Well, she couldn't blame him; but she really must go down, so she rang again, and again, and again, getting bolder and bolder about it; but all in vain. The boy was not troubled with insomnia like Aunt Abigail, or sensitive nerves. He was one of those persons, Faith thought, who was proof against such annoy-



ances as bells of all kinds, including alarm clocks and elevator signals.

She gave it up. There was nothing to do but walk down the stairs. For a minute she stood at the top, hesitating, for the stairway seemed very dark and uninviting. Twice she had gone down that way in the daytime, out of a spirit of adventure—once with the girls of the house-party. It was fun then ; now it wasn't.

Cautiously she crept down, lest she trip on the slippery stone and go headlong in the gloom to the bottom of the flight. She clung very tightly to the hand-rail, shivering a little, not with cold but with nervousness. The building was warm. It was a cold night outside and the steam was up at a good pressure. She was almost at the tenth-floor landing when she suddenly stopped, and she thought her heart had ceased beating. Somebody was out in the corridor, watching her !

Faith could not repress a little scream, and for a moment she stood there, rigid. Why,



she couldn't have told. Really, there was nothing to be alarmed at. Other tenants had as much right to be out in the hall as she had. But in spite of this undeniable truth, she would have run pell-mell up-stairs again in another moment if the somebody hadn't spoken. It was a woman's voice she heard, soft, gentle and pleasantly modulated. It reassured her in a twinkling. Then, a little way down the hall, she recognized the old lady who belonged in the Kellogg apartment.

"My dear," the latter said, "I heard you ringing the elevator bell, and I hoped you could waken that poor boy down below. I had been trying for ten minutes to do it myself. And I've been calling and calling on the telephone. The elevator boy, you know, attends to the switchboard at night, after the hall-boy goes home. My son is very ill, I fear, and my daughter-in-law is away on a visit. I must have a doctor—and dear me, I have been so worried! My boy and I are alone in the apartment."



Faith felt her courage come back quickly. She was needed—that was sufficient. And surely, this dear old lady was enough to comfort anybody, she thought. As she stood there in her neat-fitting wrapper she seemed like anything but the spook Faith had almost thought her.

“I am going down anyway,” the girl said; “and I mean to wake up that boy and give him a real shaking—if I can. I’ve got to wake up the janitor, too, or I’m afraid we’ll be flooded out of our apartment; and I must hurry. But if you don’t mind, Mrs. Kellogg——”

“Yes, I’m Mrs. Kellogg—Mrs. Kellogg, Senior.”

“If you don’t mind, Mrs. Kellogg, I’ll be ever and ever so glad to stop when I come back; and if I can do anything to help you, I’ll do it. I hope there will be something I can do.”

“Bless you!” said the old lady. “We haven’t lived long in New York, and we’ve



missed our neighbors so much. But it's asking too much of you, dear."

"Oh, no; it isn't!" insisted Faith. "Now don't worry and I'll come back."

She went on down the stairs, quite bravely now; almost gaily, for she remembered how she had been threatening to get acquainted with some of the families in the building. She had meant to do it just for the fun of accomplishing it; but this was still better. It was better to do things to help people than to do them for fun.

She passed the ninth, eighth and seventh floors; and then, as she neared the sixth floor, she stopped again, for she heard a noise that arrested her attention. It wasn't a spooky noise this time, and she wasn't frightened—only interested. It was the agonized crying of a baby—the only baby in the building and the one the landlord was trying to evict, with its parents. Faith's blood had boiled many times at the reports Ann had brought her about this affair. Any one might think that



the crime of being a baby was black and awful.

"The poor darling!" she said to herself, as she went on down. "I suppose it has the earache or the toothache, or something or other the matter with its little insides. I just wonder if I could help them any in there, too. But of course not—how silly I am."

Just then the door of the apartment opened—it was near the elevator—and the young mother looked out. Faith knew her by sight only. Now their eyes met.

"Is there anything I can do for that dear baby?" Faith asked. "I am on my way down-stairs to wake up the elevator boy for Mrs. Kellogg, and wake up the janitor to fix a water leak, and—and I'll be glad to do anything I can for you, too."

"Oh, I'll be so thankful if you will wake up that wretched boy!" exclaimed the other. "I've been trying so hard to get the drug store, for my baby is suffering dreadfully with



the colic. My husband is out on one of his trips, and the maid went to a dance and hasn't come home. I'm half distracted. You see, we never lived in New York until last summer, and it's so dreadful to be without neighbors who care just a little bit for one. We've always had so many who did care. I'll thank you ever and ever so much, dear, if you will wake him up—and shake him as hard as you can."

"I will!" declared Faith. "I'll shake him and shake him. And when I come back upstairs I'll stop to see if I can help you quiet that baby."

Then she suddenly remembered that she had promised to stop on the tenth floor at Mrs. Kellogg's. Well, she was getting considerable business, sure enough, for one lonely country girl in exclusive New York.

She made all possible haste down the remaining flights of stairs, and when she reached the lobby, there, sure as anything, was the elevator boy, sound asleep. He was curled up



very comfortably on one of the velvet-upholstered pillar seats, near the palms, with his mouth open and making a very unpleasant noise as he breathed. He was a colored boy, perhaps seventeen, and not very large.

Faith put a hand on one shoulder; then she put both hands on the same shoulder; then she braced her feet as well as she could on the inlaid stone floor; then she shook.

"Hol' on! Hol' on—leggo!" mumbled the boy, as Faith shook harder and harder. "Hol' on! Leggo! Hol' on! Yes—yes, ma'am; oh, yes, ma'am! I's a-comin', ma'am! Did yo' all ring, ma'am? 'Clare to goodness de bell nevah ring 't all! Been listen 'n' listen for it, 'n' nevah ring—no, sah, no, ma'am; nevah even tinkle. Got to git dat bell fixed suah, ma'am."

He sat up suddenly and threw his feet around to the floor; and Faith lost her grip just as suddenly and sat down with a thud that brought the stars dancing before her. She



sat there on the floor for a few seconds, looking up at the colored boy, while he sat on the velvet cushion and looked down at her.

"You just hurry up and answer that switch-board," she said, rising at length, with a twinge of pain. "Do hurry, for there's a man on the tenth floor nearly dead, and a baby on the sixth floor that may be dead by this time. They've got to have doctors and druggists, and—and how dreadful of you to lie there asleep and let them die!"

"I—I hope dey isn't really dead!" he said, and staggered sleepily across to his switch-board.

Faith went on down into the basement, for she knew where the janitor's quarters were. By this time she was quite brave, and she rang the bell furiously. The janitor's wife answered, and Faith told the trouble. Yes, they would look after it at once. It was that same old leaky pipe to the roof tanks that had troubled them before.

So, with this urgent business transacted,



Faith returned to the lobby and told the elevator boy to take her to the sixth floor.

“Oh, that poor little baby!” she said, as the young mother admitted her. “Do let me take it.”

The baby hit her on the nose the first thing, and got its tiny fist tangled in her hair, and screamed dreadfully. But Faith held it over her shoulder, as she had seen nurses do, and patted it on the back very gently. And sure enough its screams began to subside, and in a short time its head dropped down and its arms and legs stopped waving and kicking.

“I do believe it’s asleep!” said its mother, amazed.

Faith smiled. She had felt many times that she could do things of this sort, but never before had she found an opportunity.

“You may take it,” she said, “for I have another patient on the tenth floor. But I’m coming back here in a few minutes, or just as soon as I can, to see if it’s all right—the poor dear!”



Then she told the baby's mother about Mrs. Kellogg.

This time the elevator boy answered her ring quickly; and Mrs. Kellogg opened the door for her.

"How—how is your son?" Faith asked, in a whisper.

"He's sleeping for a few minutes, dear; and the doctor is coming right up."

"I'm so glad," Faith sighed. "Now I think I'll have to run up and tell Ann about the pipe; but I'll be here again in just a few minutes to see if you need me."

It was ten minutes past two by the little clock on her dresser when Faith tiptoed into her bedroom again. Ann sat on the bed, watching the pail on the floor, which by this time was half full.

"Oh, you stay long time!" she protested. "I hunt pretty soon to find where you go."

"Ann, I've had a perfectly lovely time—you won't believe it! I've made the acquaintance of two families here in the building, put



a baby to sleep, shaken the elevator boy, and routed out the janitor and his wife. Do you think I've been gone long for all that? But I'm not through yet, Ann; I suppose I shall make a night of it, now that I've begun. Really, they need me, so why shouldn't I? It's pleasant to be of some account in the world, even if one does have to miss a little sleep. And one can sleep almost any old time, but it isn't every night one can quiet a colicky baby and help a sweet old lady, and—and shake that wretched elevator boy."

Once more Faith stepped cautiously to the doorways of her aunts' rooms and listened.

"They are sleeping just beautifully," she told Ann, when she returned. "Poor old aunties—they are simply worn out with their backs and their feet. We must keep them asleep. Now, Ann, you sit right there on the bed and watch that pail, and don't let it run over. I suppose the pipe will stop leaking in a few minutes. The janitor said he would tighten something or other up under the roof;



I think it was a valve, but I'm not sure. Anyhow, he'll fix it; and when the water stops dripping, Ann, you can go back to bed. I don't know what time I'll be back."

Ann protested against such midnight performances, and evinced a strange lack of sympathy for babies with the colic and old ladies alone with their sick sons; but Faith knew what she wanted to do, and she did it.

It was twenty minutes past five when she noiselessly let herself in again at the front door. It was still night, however, and the great apartment building was very quiet and the hall lights burned as dimly as they had at midnight. The Palmer apartment was very still, too, but a bright light shone into the little hall from Faith's bedroom. In some alarm, the girl moved quickly and with the softest of steps to the door and looked in.

There lay Ann, sound asleep on Faith's bed, in a rather ungraceful attitude, with her feet hanging off. The water had stopped dripping, but the pail was nearly full.



With cautious movements Faith lifted Ann's feet on to the bed. Then she got a blanket and put it over the sleeper, and tucked it in carefully. Having done this, and turned off the light, she stole again to listen to her aunts' regular breathing. The old ladies had slept peacefully through it all. There was a very tender light in the girl's brown eyes as she stood for a minute listening; and the smile that came and went upon her lips was elusive and wonderful enough for an artist.

Ten minutes later Faith herself was asleep, curled up under a steamer rug on the couch in the living-room. The brown eyes were hidden, but something of the smile still lingered.



## CHAPTER XXI

### A TOY HOME

FAITH went the following week, of an evening, to see Brenda Castle at her home. New York was becoming less of a labyrinth to Faith, and she found the place easily enough—tucked away at the top of one of those gloom-producing human domiciles known as “walk-ups.”

She walked up the four flights of stairs to the fifth floor, and, out of breath, found Brenda and her mother expecting her. Brenda had said they lived in a little apartment, and little it was. Beside it, the Palmer suite at Morningside Park was palatial.

“But it is cute!” Faith exclaimed. “It’s a regular toy home, isn’t it? Only it must be dreadfully hot in the summer.”

“Terrible!” agreed Brenda. “Sometimes



I am tempted to go down and sleep on the sidewalk, as they do in the tenement district. One night last July I really thought we should die up here, Faith."

"But you don't stay in New York all summer?" Faith asked.

"For the last two summers we have."

Brenda did not explain further; but Faith knew that this girl's father had died two years before, so she needed no further enlightenment.

"Well," said Faith, as Brenda got the marshmallows ready to toast over the gasplate in the kitchenette—which was scarcely a kitchenette, but more of a slit in the wall—"well, I've been thinking things over since I saw you last, and I've made up my mind that you'd make a really good schoolma'am up at Chester—for one of those district schools, you know. If you had a school—probably not the McAllister School, but a better one—you wouldn't have to stay in New York all summer; why, you wouldn't have to stay here at



all. And you'd have a ten-weeks vacation in the summer, and you could ride with me sometimes in my new automobile. Oh, I haven't got it yet; and I haven't found courage to tell Aunt Abigail I want it. She'll say no at first, and be very indignant; but she'll get it for me, of course. She always does that way, you know. I don't want a big touring-car, of course—just big enough to take my two aunts out with; and I think I'd like blue pretty well. I know Aunt Abigail would never get me a red one. But I was talking about the school. I mean to speak to Mr. Widdowson about you, Brenda—he's on the school board—and I'm sure you can get a place if you'll come."

Brenda looked at her friend in some amazement.

"It's so good of you to think of it," she said, "but I never could do it. I don't know enough."

"The idea!" Faith exclaimed. "Why, you told me yourself that you had a year in Miss



Dusenfield's Long Island School before your father died—and that's one of the best schools in the country. But even if you didn't know half as much as a high-school girl, Brenda, or one-quarter as much, you could teach such a school as McAllister's. The children there don't know anything at all—so it would be dreadfully easy. When I taught McAllister's I didn't know half as much as you do."

"If I could," said Brenda, thoughtfully, "wouldn't it be splendid! Mother has been longing so to go to the country—and we simply couldn't."

The mother did look as if she needed the country even more than her daughter. She was a quiet, refined woman, who seemed as much wrapped up in Brenda as the Misses Abigail and Deborah were in a certain other young lady.

"Well, you simply can," Faith cried, beaming; "and you simply shall. The examination is easier than two sticks—it's just a joke. And I'll show you all I know about teaching,



which, of course, won't take very long. It's a good time now to begin making plans for next fall. Or it really might be that you could get a place this very winter, for teachers aren't plentiful up in those districts, and you know so many girls do get married! And when they get married they give up their schools right away, and sometimes don't even give notice. Two of the girls who taught at McAllister's did that last year, and Mr. Widowson had the most terrible time filling their places. Anyhow, you could move up to Chester in the summer and get settled, and have a rest before school began in the fall. Chester, you know, is a summer resort, and the ocean—oh, it is glorious!”

Faith knew that Brenda's salary at the glove counter was not over seven or eight dollars a week, while, as a teacher, she would receive more, even in a country school.

“And you can live much more inexpensively,” she urged. “Why, I know of some lovely little all-the-year cottages right in sight



of the sea, Brenda Castle, and there aren't any sky-houses in Chester, as Ann says; there isn't even one of them. The people live on the ground and they don't have to burn lights to eat luncheon by at noon."

Brenda was so eager and so nervous that she burned up a whole batch of marshmallows.

"If you keep on, Faith Palmer, you'll really make me think I can do it. And if I think I can, why I can—and I will!"

"Of course you will," concluded Faith.

That was as far as they got with the school-teaching affair, for they had so many other things to talk of, and Faith had to start for home at nine o'clock. Aunt Abigail had wished it.

Brenda went to the car with her, and made her promise to come again; and promised in turn to visit Faith. The girls separated, happy in the new friendship.

When she reached the Morningside Apartment Building a limousine was standing just in front, and it looked to her very much like



the Love car. She hurried in as fast as she could, and when she unlocked the front door and opened it, sure enough, there was Kathryn, hiding behind it.

“Kathryn Love—you dear old thing!” Faith cried, embracing her. “You’ll have to get a great deal thinner than you are now before you can successfully secrete yourself in a New York apartment. But surely you didn’t come alone!”

“You don’t see any one else, do you?” observed Kathryn, dryly.

“Yes, I do!”

Faith’s eyes were pretty sharp. She walked straight down the hall to her own room, turned in, and looked behind the door.

“Betty Fairchild, I saw you peeking out—you sly thing! Well, this is a surprise——”

Just then somebody’s hands were passed quickly in front of her eyes and clasped there.

“Who is it?” a disguised voice inquired.

“It’s Leah Churchill, of course. If you



want to fool me, really and truly, take off that ring on your little finger next time. Oh, I know you, Leah ; so let go."

It was Leah, though she hadn't come with Kathryn and Betty, but by herself. She was going home to Boston for Christmas, and to stay for two or three weeks, and she had come in to say good-by.

Betty was down from Fordyce, spending the week-end with Kathryn, and they, too, had come to the Morningside Apartment Building on a Christmas errand. The Loves wanted Faith and her aunts to dine with them Christmas Day.

"Where are my aunts?" Faith demanded, for the first time noticing that they were not in evidence.

"Your Aunt Abigail," said Ann, coming out of the kitchenette, where she was baking, "be down helpin' old Mrs. Kellogg take care o' the man who got information back in his head. And your Aunt Deborah, she did was visitin' down with the janitor's wife. She say



if Miss Abigail go, she do be go too. She be back in few whiles."

Faith looked at her friends triumphantly.

"There!" she exclaimed. "See the progress the Palmer family is making in the New York social whirl!"

"I'm sure I don't know how you ever did it—to get your Aunt Abigail and your Aunt Deborah out in society like this," said Betty; "for of course I know it was you who did it—nobody else could."

"Yes, I did it," Faith confessed. "I brought Mrs. Kellogg up here to call on Aunt Abigail and Aunt Debby, and the next day I took my aunts down to call on Mrs. Kellogg. Aunt Abigail said she'd never go; but she did. At first, her formality was simply dreadful—but you see I had warned Mrs. Kellogg in advance, and she didn't care the least bit. Now she and Aunt Abigail are actually chummy; at least, as much so as two old ladies of that sort can be. But Aunt Debby likes the janitor's wife better. You see, we



stopped in there one day, when Aunt Debby and I had been out for a walk. She thought it was really terrible to be going in to see the janitor's wife; but the janitor's wife wanted to learn how to knit, and Aunt Debby is showing her."

Then Faith laughed merrily and sat down exhausted.

"I do so want Aunt Abigail to see that dear baby down-stairs!" she added. "But so far I haven't figured out any way. Oh, it's the sweetest, cutest, most colicky baby you ever saw, Betty. I wish I could get Aunt Abigail to hold it. She would love it, I know!"

Just then Miss Abigail returned from her visit to the tenth floor. Kathryn gave her the invitation to dine at the Loves' on Christmas.

"It is very good of your mother to ask us," the old lady said, "but it has always been a cardinal principle with the Palmers to take their Christmas dinners at home. I should like Faith to grow up in that spirit; and you



know my sister Deborah and I shall not be with Faith on many more Christmas Days."

"Of course you will—both of you!" Faith put her arms around the old lady's neck. Aunt Abigail did seem very old, and her infirmities were clearly gaining upon her. "Oh, auntie, what would I do without you? And you know I am studying very hard here in New York so that I can take the very best care of you and Aunt Deborah; and we'll all be at 'The Oaks' on Christmas, after this one, for years and years. Oh, we really will. If you talk like that, I shall cry my eyes out—and I'll begin it right now!"

She put her head on the old lady's black silk waist. It was a long time after that before Aunt Abigail referred again, even distantly, to her narrowing span of life.

After the three girls had gone, and Aunt Deborah was back from the janitor's rooms, Faith came out of her bedroom, where she was preparing to retire.

"I'm so glad, auntie, that you declined the



Love invitation," she said, with a radiant smile, "because—because I do want to ask Brenda Castle and her mother to dine here with us on Christmas. I'd like to write Brenda to-night."



## CHAPTER XXII

### A LONELY CALLER

ON the afternoon before Christmas old Mrs. Kellogg prevailed upon the Misses Abigail and Deborah to accompany her to a church affair a few blocks away. Faith helped her aunts to dress—for the Morningside School of Domestic Arts had closed for two weeks—and “prettied” them up, as she said. Indeed, they looked very distinctive in their quaint old-fashioned black gowns. Aunt Abigail wore a white ruching in the sleeves and neck; Aunt Debby the usual soft kerchief.

Having seen the three old ladies safely down the elevator and out on the sidewalk, Faith watched them until they turned a corner. She would have gone further, except that Aunt Abigail said it was wholly unnecessary—she was quite able to take care of herself and of Aunt Deborah, too. Moreover, she



refused to let Faith send for a taxicab. Of all things, she most disliked motor-cars and gasoline, and submitted to that kind of transportation only in extreme emergency. She had never ridden in an automobile at all until Faith got her into one.

When the old ladies were out of sight, Faith returned to the apartment. Now was the time to make some necessary Christmas preparations that had to be done in the absence of the aunts. Perhaps Faith, in her mysterious ways of bringing things about, had engineered the invitation that had taken the old ladies away for a couple of hours. If so, she kept the secret from Ann, who, she had learned, was not especially good at withholding confidential information.

"Now, Ann," she said, bustling in, "we must get all those packages out and rewrap them and tie them with the Christmas string I got yesterday. Dear me, what a time we've had hiding them! What fun it is to have Christmas in an apartment!"



From behind the little dresser in Ann's room she dragged forth a roughly wrapped, home-made package, which, on being unrolled, disclosed a warm woolen dressing-gown. Faith had made it for Aunt Abigail by working late at night, after the rest of the household had retired. Then from back of a bookcase in the living-room she produced, when Ann helped her move the heavy piece of furniture, another package containing a dainty porch-jacket which she had made with similar self-sacrificing toil for Aunt Deborah.

Other bundles were dragged from various hiding places, ticketed, tied up, and hidden away again. Mysterious notes were written, Christmas decorations examined, and plans made for some surreptitious work to be done that night after the aunts were asleep. Faith and Ann meant to turn the apartment into a veritable Santa Claus den, for the delectation of her relatives when they awoke, and for the benefit of the invited guests and such other persons as might happen in. The Palmer



apartment was no longer without a calling list.

Things were very much in disorder, therefore, when the door-bell rang unexpectedly. Faith dropped some holly wreaths and stood erect.

"Mercy!" she said, under her breath. "Who do you suppose that is? I wonder if my aunts could possibly have come back so soon. Oh, Ann, get the things out of the living-room—quick! Come—help me do it!"

Together they made the Christmas things fly. Meanwhile the door-bell rang again, with a sickly, discouraged air, as if the summons would not be repeated the third time.

"That is not Aunt Abigail," said Faith, with a note of relief. "If she doesn't get in the first time she rings, she makes the old bell jingle, you know. I'll go to the door, Ann, and you stay back there near the dining-room and keep anybody from seeing things."

She hurried to the front door and opened it a few inches, inquiringly. Then she suddenly



let go of the door altogether, in surprise, for there stood—Prudence Lane!

Certainly she looked like a very sweet girl, a portrait in herself, as she stood there. Her cheeks were like two roses and her eyes bright and shining, yet hesitating; and her lips a little parted, as if she wanted to say something, but wasn't just sure what. Her unconscious pose was exquisitely set off, too, by the white cloth skirt and dainty blouse she wore.

"I—I saw your aunts go away," she said, after a moment, "so I came up here, Faith, to see you a minute. Of course I know that your aunts wouldn't let me in if they were home. I know that I'm very much in disfavor with them, and I don't blame them. But I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind it so much—and—and I've got something I do want to say."

At first Faith hesitated, because she knew what Aunt Abigail would say were she there. Then she acted on her natural impulse.



"Why, of course I shall be glad to have you come in," she said, throwing back the door.

She led the caller into the living-room.

"Won't you have a chair?" she said. "We're getting ready for Christmas, and things look rather untidy."

"I should like to see our apartment upset a little sometimes," returned Prudence. "It never is. And—and we're not going to decorate because mother doesn't like the muss. Besides, we're going out for Christmas dinner—we always do. Father and mother and I always eat our Christmas turkey at the Waldorf-Astoria, you see."

"A hotel!" exclaimed Faith. "What a funny place to go for Christmas dinner. I shouldn't like that one bit. We were invited out, too, but we're not going one step. Aunt Abigail thinks that home is the place for everybody on Christmas; and I think so, too. But of course that rule cannot always work, for if it did where would anybody get Christ-



mas guests? And Christmas guests are as much a part of Christmas as anything."

"I think you are right," said the caller; "but I have to take things as they are. I can't help myself—and that is just what I came here to talk about. In the first place my—my mother isn't my mother at all. She's my stepmother. Did you know that?"

"No," said Faith; and suddenly a light began to break in upon her.

"You poor girl!" she said. "I'm sorry you haven't a real mother. I haven't, either. I haven't even a father. My daddy died almost two years ago, away out in California."

"My real father is dead, too," said Prudence.

"What?" asked Faith, in amazement. "Isn't Mr. Lane your own father?"

"No." Prudence made a gesture of despair. "It's a terrible tangle, but I'll try to explain it. My own mother died and my father married again—married my present stepmother. Then my father died and left me to my stepmother, and she married again—married Mr



Lane. So they aren't even a little bit related to me; only my stepmother is my guardian and has charge of the money my father left me. My real name isn't even Lane. It's Huntington—Prudence Huntington."

Faith showed by her face how greatly surprised she was.

"Then I think I'd take my own name, anyway!" she said, with something like indignation.

"I can't," returned Prudence, with a droop in her voice. "I—can't have anything that belongs to me. My stepmother makes me call myself Prudence Lane—and I hate it! I don't want to be Prudence Lane; I want to be my own self. My stepmother refuses to let me make the acquaintances I want, because she says there are so few girls suitable to my station—think of that! All my life I've been held up as something so very wonderful—at least, ever since my parents died—because, among other things, I happen to be descended from the Pilgrim fathers. My step-



mother is descended from them, too, and belongs to ever and ever so many Colonial and Revolutionary societies and things of that sort; and I'll have to belong to them, too, when I'm older. I suppose my stepmother will make me join every single one of them—but I won't! So there! I hate the Pilgrim fathers and the Revolutionary generals——”

“Why, I don't!” broke in Faith, her face a curious admixture of perplexity and amusement. “I don't hate them, because I am descended from them myself. I am descended and descended and descended from them, in a dreadfully straight line, you know, without any breaks, Aunt Abigail says. I suppose all my grandfathers were generals or majors or captains or something or other—Aunt Abigail could tell you just what. I wish you could see our attic up at Chester. It's full of old chests, and the old chests are full of generals' uniforms, and majors' uniforms and captains' uniforms, and every one of them—all those men, I mean—were descended from the Pil-



grim fathers; every one. And I am descended from all those men, and Aunt Abigail says there isn't a drop of blood in me that's plebeian—except on my mother's side."

Faith's voice suddenly fell off a bit, in distress.

"My mother wasn't descended from the Pilgrims," she explained. "That's why Aunt Abigail has never quite forgiven her for being my mother. But she wasn't plebeian; not one bit, even if she didn't have generals and majors and captains for her grandfathers, and Pilgrims for her great-great-grandfathers. My mother's father was a university professor, and I think that is just as good as being descended from generals!"

Prudence Huntington leaned back in her chair and looked at Faith.

"My stepmother has always imagined," she said, "that I was too blooded—that's what they say about dogs—to associate with everyday people. She thinks the same thing about herself. She is always talking about 'good



families.' Oh, Faith, I'm dreadfully ashamed of the things that have happened ; but now I am going to tell my stepmother that she can't possibly claim anything over the Palmer family. I have so few friends—and not one real put-your-arm-around friend."

"I have so few myself—that is, here in New York!" said Faith. "And I knew all the time that it wasn't you who wanted to be so exclusive. I told Aunt Abigail so."

"Aren't stepmothers terrible?" observed Prudence. "Especially stepmothers who are descended from Pilgrims!"

"Well," said Faith, rather thoughtfully, "I don't think I ever knew any other Pilgrim stepmother; but I know two stepmothers up at Chester who are perfectly lovely to their stepchildren—just lovely. And their stepchildren love them as much as they did their own mothers; maybe more."

Prudence sighed.

"Well," she said, "I am glad if some girls have lovely stepmothers. I don't see why a





“I AM SO GLAD YOU CAME”







stepmother can't be lovely, if she really sets out to be. But I'm so glad I came in to-day, Faith. I've wanted so long to explain, but I couldn't find a good opportunity."

"You don't need to explain any more," laughed Faith. "I understand it all well enough. I'm so glad you came, and I want you to see some of the things I'm getting ready for Christmas."

About an hour later the door-bell rang again. Ten seconds after it rang the first time, it rang a second time; and its ring was very decisive and perhaps arrogant.

"Mercy!" cried Faith, rising from the floor in her bedroom, where she and Prudence Huntington were looking over some fancy work Faith had been making for Kathryn Love's Christmas gift. "Mercy! That's Aunt Abigail's ring, sure as anything! Why, it's nearly four o'clock!"

"Oh, it can't be so late—but it really is!" cried Prudence, likewise scrambling to her feet and looking at the clock on Faith's



dresser. "Oh, oh! What shall I do? Your Aunt Abigail will tear me to pieces if she catches me here!"

Faith looked about in distress. There were times when she felt a sudden return of her original awe of Miss Abigail. Now she remembered only the diatribes of the old lady upon the Lane family and everything connected with it. Undoubtedly there would be some sort of scene if she found Prudence there. Of course she wouldn't tear the girl to pieces, but she would be very haughty and disagreeable. It would humiliate Faith and hurt Prudence dreadfully. It mustn't be.

"I'll get under the bed!" suggested Prudence, in a frightened whisper.

"No; don't do that," Faith whispered back. "It would muss you up so."

She cast her eyes rapidly over the miniature room. Up at "The Oaks" there would have been any number of places of concealment, where a person might hide for days without being discovered. But here in this



sky-house it was hard to hide even a Christmas present.

“Here!” she said, excitedly, after the survey. “Here, Prudence; get into the closet—quick! Oh, there are so many clothes in there that you’ll have to get down on the floor. Can you do it—yes! Now don’t breathe even a little bit!”

“I’ve got to!” faltered Prudence, as she crouched in a corner, dragging down some of Faith’s dresses upon her head. “I’ve got to breathe just a little bit—and I’m afraid I’m going to sneeze. A-a-a-choo!”

She lost her balance and fell over on the closet floor, while a couple more of Faith’s garments came tumbling down upon her.

However, there was no help for it. Faith shut the closet door and made sure it was latched. Just then she heard Aunt Abigail say, from the hall, addressing Ann, who had admitted her:

“Where is Faith?”



"She do be come, in few whiles," said Ann. At least, Ann was loyal to Faith, though not diplomatic or resourceful.

"Here I am, auntie," said Faith, herself, emerging from her bedroom with cheeks very red and her hair tumbled. She felt dreadfully guilty, for never before had she deceived her aunts in this way. Still, she felt just a little rebellious at the moment at the necessity for doing it. It was merely to prevent a most disagreeable scene, and her conscience quite justified her. And of course she should tell Aunt Abigail afterward. She didn't mind Aunt Abigail's scenes herself—not a bit! But she simply would not subject Prudence to unnecessary pain—hadn't Prudence suffered enough!

"Here I am, auntie," she repeated.

The old lady's keen eyes saw at once that Faith had an unusual color.

"What have you been doing, child?" she inquired.

"Don't ask me now," returned Faith, with



an attempt at a laugh. "I'm going to tell you all about it to-night."

Of course curious things were apt to happen on Christmas Eve, and Aunt Abigail took off her wraps without further inquiries.

"I fear you are making yourself ill," she said, "with your mysteries."

"She do be work so hard," condoled the wily Ann.

Aunt Abigail went into her bedroom to take off her shoes and put on her slippers, because, as she observed with some emphasis, her miserable old feet were absolutely worthless and she never should have tried to wear those new shoes. And Aunt Deborah went into her bedroom, in turn, to lie down for a few minutes to rest her wretched old back.

As soon as both the old ladies were thus engaged, Faith ran on her toes to her own room and opened the closet door.

"Quick!" she said, in a hoarse, excited whisper. "Quick!—now is the chance to get out!"



There was no back door to the Palmer apartment. New York apartments aren't noted for back doors. The only rear communication with the outside world was by way of the dumb-waiter to the basement, by means of which parcels and supplies were received. But Prudence couldn't get out that way. She must go by the front entrance.

"Quick!—come along!" Faith repeated. Then she dragged away the dresses that covered her friend and gave Prudence a helping hand.

"Oh, will you ever forgive me for getting you into all this trouble?" the latter gasped, as she found herself on her feet. "Will you ever ——"

"Hush! It isn't any trouble. I'm so happy to do it. But don't even whisper—and come along with me! Walk on the very ends of your toes, and whatever else you do, don't sneeze again! I don't think Aunt Abigail has got one shoe off yet."

Hand in hand, the two girls crept down the



hall, their eyes wary, their lips slightly parted in their excitement, and their cheeks burning-red. If the newspaper photographer could have caught Faith now she would have made a masterpiece for the decoration of his front page. Prudence, too, would have outdone herself posing.

They passed Aunt Deborah's room with absolutely no noise, and slipped past Aunt Abigail's partly-open door. Faith got a glimpse of the old lady's back as she bent over in the struggle with her shoes.

Then, very softly, Faith turned the catch—and Prudence slipped away, with a fervid pressure of the hand, but without even a whisper. Softly again, Faith closed the door.

"Where is that draft coming from?" called Aunt Abigail, as her grandniece entered the room.

Faith ignored the question.

"Let me help you with your shoes, auntie," she said. "I know your poor old feet must hurt you just dreadfully."



That night after Aunt Abigail was in bed Faith stole in again, sat down on the counterpane, and put one hand caressingly on the old lady's scant white locks.

"Auntie," she said, sweetly, "I've got a confession to make."

"What have you spoiled now?" asked Aunt Abigail, not very severely. Only the day previous Faith had ruined the pudding by experimenting with some scientific theory of cooking. It wasn't the fault of the theory, she insisted, but of herself. She hadn't got the ingredients just right, and they burned.

"Oh, I haven't spoiled anything this time," Faith laughed. "And I haven't done anything so dreadfully terrible. But let me tell you first, auntie, that I have discovered the most lovely girl, who's descended from the Pilgrims and the Puritans and the generals and majors and captains—just as much as I am."

"Eh?" said Aunt Abigail, rising on one elbow. If any subject appealed to her more than another, it was this matter of Puritan descent.



She had long held the Palmer family as far superior to the common herd who could not trace themselves back to such stock.

"She is a lovely girl," insisted Faith, sympathetically, "and so dreadfully lonely. Auntie, I want to invite her to have dinner with us to-morrow, because her stepmother and her sort-of stepfather always take Christmas dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria, and don't like Christmas things because they muss up an apartment. She doesn't want to go to the Waldorf—she wants a real friend! Auntie, she was here to see me to-day."

Her voice sank very low, and she patted the old lady's head ever so gently.

"Who is she?" asked Aunt Abigail. "You didn't tell me that any girl was here."

"No, I didn't—didn't tell you, auntie, because, you see—because I was afraid you would scold her for coming. I didn't want her scolded. I—don't care if you scold me, auntie, because I know you don't mean it; and I know you love me and I love you. But



it made me feel dreadfully to think that perhaps—just perhaps!—you might scold Prudence—Prudence Lane; only her real name ——”

“Prudence Lane!”

Aunt Abigail sat up suddenly in bed, very straight.

“Now I’ve told you,” said Faith, and her voice showed symptoms of tears. “I never meant to keep it from you, and I haven’t. Won’t you lay your poor tired old head back on the pillow while I tell you every single thing about it?”

Faith choked a little, and Aunt Abigail lay back obediently. Then, holding her hand and stroking it now and then, she related, in detail, the story of Prudence Huntington’s call. Several times the old lady tried to sit up in bed; several times she made quick, impetuous gestures and tried to speak; several times she did speak. But when it was over she lay there on her pillow, quite silent, for Faith was crying.



“Now you’ll let me ask her to have Christmas dinner with us, won’t you, auntie? Now that you know all about it, you’ll let her come?”

Aunt Abigail was silent for half a minute. Then she observed, not without a certain hardness :

“Ann will have to put another leaf in the table.”



## CHAPTER XXIII

### BURNED TOAST

WHEN Faith returned from the Domestic Arts School one afternoon late in January, and let herself into the Palmer apartment, she smelled burning toast. It was a very familiar smell; for old Angeline, the superannuated servant up at "The Oaks," had burned the toast every day for twenty years—so Aunt Abigail had often said.

Angeline had been visiting her relatives near Boston, and resting, during the Palmers' winter in New York. Indeed, it was Angeline's breakdown that had finally brought about Miss Abigail's consent to Faith's plan to come to the metropolis. Without Angeline it had seemed quite impossible to keep "The Oaks" open. The old ladies had tried other girls while Faith was in Fordyce Hall; but



without Faith to manage them, all of them had gone their way quickly.

Now Faith smelled the burning toast the moment she opened the front door to the apartment.

"Angeline is here!" she cried, sniffing.

"Angeline is surely here!"

She tripped quickly down the hall to the kitchenette, and there, sure enough, was poor old Angeline, tall, spare, and with the same crooked nose. She was fairly enveloped in the pungent smoke from the toast which Ann had just rescued from the kitchenette toy range. Ann's face was indicative of the most profound contempt.

"Aw-w!" she exclaimed, throwing the blackened slices into the sink and turning the water on them to stop the smoking. "Aw-w! why don't you be stay where you b'long?"

Just then Angeline flourished the toasting fork rather wildly, for Faith's arms were about her neck.



"You dear old creature!" the girl cried. "Where in the world did you come from, and how did you get here? Why, I thought you were sick, and I've been feeling so sorry for you; and now here you are burning up the toast just as natural as life!"

Angeline sat down, as Faith released her, and put the toasting-fork on the cover of the laundry tubs.

"I have had enough of my relatives," she said. "If a person is sick and wants to rest, relatives ain't the people to go to. But sure you are looking so sweet, Faith Palmer! It ain't no wonder your old aunts dote on you so. But such a place to live! Land sakes alive!"

Angeline held up her hands, palms outward, and rolled her eyes about the kitchenette.

"Deliver us!" she added, emulating the manner of Aunt Abigail.

"Lor' deliver you!" snapped Ann, and strode out of the kitchenette and into her bedroom.

"I'm sorry you don't like it," said Faith,



laughing. "I think it's just lovely. But, Angeline, have you really come back to stay?"

The old woman looked really pathetic.

"Stay?" she demanded. "How can I stay when there ain't room 'nough here for a fly to turn 'round, much less a human? Of course I ain't askin' your aunts to turn nobody out for me. I reckon I ain't much good no more. My work days is done. No, I ain't come back to stay."

"Yes, you have!" declared Faith. "Of course you have! We can fix you up a cot somewhere or other until we go back to 'The Oaks.' It won't be so very long, Angeline, before we'll be getting ready to go. Won't the old house seem funny after this? But won't it seem good?"

Aunt Abigail came in just about then, from some guild meeting to which Mrs. Kellogg had taken her; and Aunt Deborah came up from the janitor's quarters. They received Angeline without marked enthusiasm.



But that night, after Angeline had retired on a cot across one end of the dining-room, Aunt Abigail observed to Faith that she supposed they should have to take care of the old creature the rest of her life. She had no place to go, and there was plenty of room at "The Oaks."

"Faith," said the old lady, after this point was settled, "how much longer do you reckon it will be before you get enough of this city of abandoned souls—this city whose wickedness cries to heaven, and where men have monopolized the ground and so many tiers of the air that one must get to the clouds to see the daylight in one's home? You know that your Aunt Deborah and I came here for you, Faith, and we shall wear our cross, I suppose, until you are satisfied. But now that Angeline is here, we shall be seriously inconvenienced for room, especially as you desire to have so much company. I do not wish you to become frivolous, child. Your Prudence Lane has spent three evenings here within a week ——"



"Prudence Huntington, auntie," corrected Faith.

Miss Abigail waved aside the interruption.

"—— and your Brenda Hassell ——"

"Brenda Castle, auntie. She's coming to Chester to live. You know she's to teach."

"—— has been here once to dinner and once to stay all night. I believe you have had that squalling baby from the sixth floor up here every day for a month ——"

"Why, auntie! It isn't a squalling baby—not one little bit!"

"—— and its mother makes herself uncomfortably at home here. Elizabeth Fairchild and Kathryn Love are running in and out. I do not see how Elizabeth gets down to New York so often; she must be neglecting her studies at Fordyce School and spending a great deal of money. The Fairchilds were always extravagant, but I cannot believe that Elizabeth's father knows how much of her time she spends in this city."

"You know that Betty and Kathryn are



dear friends," explained Faith; "and whenever Kathryn comes home Betty comes with her—usually. But really, auntie, it hasn't been many times; not more than three or four all winter."

"Well," resumed Miss Abigail, dismissing Betty, "I am sorry you have made the acquaintance of additional girls in this building. I do not just approve of Marjoretta Hearse ——"

"Marjorie Hurst, auntie, dear."

"—— and I do not just see why you hunted her out and brought her here. She has a deceitful look about her, somehow or other."

"Oh, auntie! I don't believe she'd tell the tiniest bit of a fib. She says her prayers every night, Marjorie does. But probably I shouldn't have known her if it hadn't been for that baby. She saw me holding it, and she wanted to hold it, too; so I told her to come along up here to the apartment and she could. And she did."

"There is another thing I should like to



speak to you about, while we are on this subject of promiscuous acquaintances," continued Miss Abigail, having in turn dismissed this latest of Faith's friends. "That Worthington boy has been here every Saturday night during January."

Faith's face went suddenly crimson.

"Oh, you are mistaken, auntie; surely you are! He has been here only three Saturday nights. But Betty was here one of those nights, and Prudence Huntington on two of them; so I don't know whom he came to see. Prudence is a beautiful girl, and I shouldn't be one bit surprised if Bruce liked her better than he likes me. Why shouldn't he?"

"He should be up at Yale College, studying his lesson; not gallivanting about New York City. In my day, such things were not permitted. Boys were not allowed to call on the girls ——"

"But, auntie, I don't care one single thing for Bruce Worthington—only he is funny sometimes, and makes the girls laugh. He is



just the smart age, you know. And he is rather a good-looking boy, and the girls sort of like him; and it's handy to have boys around sometimes, to do errands."

Miss Abigail was silent for a minute, reflecting.

"Well," she said, at length, "when you are ready to return to Chester I trust you may appreciate your home all the more."

"Oh, I do love my home!" the girl cried. "And I'm ready to go back to it just the minute you say. I've had a lovely time in New York, but I'm satisfied. And after all, auntie, people are just people, whether they live in sky-houses or ground-houses. New York doesn't change people much—I don't care what some folks say! Auntie, if we can stay here until the first of March, I'll be so happy to go back to Chester."

A look of immense relief came into the old lady's eyes.

"And I'm sure," Faith went on, "that you and Aunt Deborah never will have any cause



to regret bringing me here. I've worked hard, auntie, really I have. Of course I've had some jolly times ; but work has been the main thing. Don't you think so, Aunt Abigail ? ”

Faith was a bit anxious.

“ Yes, you have worked, Faith ; I am not finding fault with you. But there comes a time when one has had enough of a thing.”

“ But really,” Faith answered, “ this winter in New York has done wonders for me. You and Aunt Debby don't realize it now as much as you will after we're home.”

“ I imagine we shall keep hearing about the domestic school,” objected Miss Abigail, dryly.

“ Yes, you will. You know, I can see that I'm a different sort of girl, in some respects, from what I was when I came down here. I'm—well, I'm more like a matron. I feel like going ahead and doing things, because I know how to do them. I can plan a meal, auntie—and I do love our meal-planning



course at different costs. I can cook a meal, too. Yes, and I can plan things all over the house ; at least, I'm beginning to know how to do it. Our lessons on ' Emergencies ' has helped me so much ! Why, auntie, I can even plan a house itself—think of that ! Don't you think I've developed into something of a wonder ? ”

She laughed happily.

“ I think,” remarked Aunt Abigail, “ that you have developed in several directions. Your sense of conceit does not appear to have suffered.”

Faith got up and put her arms about Aunt Abigail's neck, as she was wont to do when she had some bright thought to communicate.

“ Auntie,” she said, “ I saw the dearest little car in an automobile store window to-day—the cutest little blue tourabout you ever saw. It was for sale ! ”

“ Automobile ! For sale ? ” Miss Abigail was suspicious.

“ Yes ; it would hold you and Aunt Deborah



in the back seat, and I'm sure I could sit in front and steer it."

"Have you lost your senses?" The old lady put on her glasses.

"Oh, I didn't mean that I could steer it here in New York. I never should think of such a thing. But I surely could steer it in Chester. I thought—thought perhaps we might—might afford it next summer ——"

"Never!" Aunt Abigail was very much horrified. "Automobile? Faith, you amaze me!"

"Well, if we can't afford it, auntie, of course I'll not say another word. I was afraid we couldn't ——"

"Afford it!" Aunt Abigail's eyes snapped fire. "We could afford it if I chose to buy it. I am not talking of what we can afford and what we cannot. Automobile! Deliver us!"

"Well, then," concluded Faith, "we'll not think another thing about it—not now!"



## CHAPTER XXIV

### TO THE GRAND CENTRAL

It was a raw Saturday early in March, with a mixture of rain and snow, and a blustering wind that blew over the Hudson River and across the roofs between the river and Morningside Drive. It was scarcely a day for pleasure-motoring, and probably most of the automobiles that were out in New York had business in hand. The big Worthington touring-car certainly had business, as Bruce took it up the circling street on the Heights and brought it to a crunching stop in front of the Morningside Apartment Building.

He left it there and went inside. Half an hour later he emerged, bearing three suit-cases in one hand and some shawl-straps and steamer-rugs in another. Back of him came the colored hall-boy Faith had shaken awake—who was working in the daytime now so



that he might not be tempted—bearing some more baggage and wraps.

Back of him came the janitor, dragging a trunk, and back of him the janitor's wife, helping.

Next was Aunt Abigail, supported by Faith, for the sidewalk was treacherous with ice ; and next to them came Aunt Deborah, supported by Betty—and stepping very gingerly, you may be sure.

Finally came old Angeline, walking alone, and back of her, with high head and firm tread, Ann, also alone.

“ All right ! ” said Bruce, dropping his load and supporting Miss Abigail on the opposite side from Faith. “ Steady—here you are ! Up just another step, please ! ” And Miss Abigail was deposited safely in the rear of the car.

It was Miss Deborah's turn next, and then Angeline's, and then Ann's ; and finally Faith and Betty got up in front, next to the driving-seat.



Bruce was cranking up when another automobile skidded close behind them and stopped. Kathryn Love got out rather hurriedly, and then, more sedately, Miss Leah Churchill.

"We are going to trail you to the station," said Kathryn; "and of course we'll take Betty back."

"I almost wish I were going along with them to Chester," sighed Betty. "It seems so long to wait until summer; and I'm tired to death of Fordyce and work and—and everything except having my own way, as Faith does."

"Why, Betty Fairchild!" laughed Faith, pulling the fur robe over her and over Betty.

"Well, you do have your own way!" Betty insisted. "When you want to go to New York, you go there; and when you want to go home, back you go. If you don't like one school, you go to another; and if you want a dear blue little automobile, your aunts go straight and buy one for you. Never in the world could I get my father and mother to



buy a blue automobile for me—or any other kind of automobile.”

“You have automobiles—two or three of them,” reminded Faith.

“But not my very own—not a single one!”

“Well,” argued Faith, “the blue car will be my aunts’, of course. They need it more than I do, but I shall have to steer it for them and make it go. Aunt Abigail could never steer an automobile—could you, auntie?”

Faith turned her face toward the back.

“Well, I should hope not!” said Miss Abigail.

“All ready!” said Bruce, bouncing up to the driving-seat, amid trunks and bags. “All ready; we’re off!”

The levers crunched and the car moved. Faith, peering out from under the top, looked back at the towering Morningside Building.

“Oh, I can scarcely realize that I am going away from it—going away for good! Really, it does seem like home, doesn’t it, auntie?”



As usual, either aunt might have been included, or both. Both answered.

"Deliver us!" said Aunt Abigail.

"I shall remember it," said Aunt Deborah, diplomatically.

"And there is Prudence Huntington, waving at us from a window!" cried Faith, in sudden exuberance, almost going head first out of the car. Betty caught her and held her.

"Oh, Betty, give me a handkerchief—quick! There's that dear baby, too; and I do believe it is waving good-by. Look, Betty, look!"

Betty, too, put out her head and nearly twisted it off looking back.

"And there's Marjorie Hurst—she's got the baby!" she said.

"Is anybody else waving?" asked Faith, with a break in her voice. "I—I can't see, Betty. You—your head is right in my way."

"Yes, I think there is somebody else waving; but I can't make out who it is. Here, give me the handkerchief and I'll wave back."



She did wave back, very vigorously, until the car was too far around the circle and the Morningside Building was lost to view. Then she put the handkerchief in her muff and leaned back. For a minute she was silent—quite a while for Miss Betty Fairchild. Meanwhile the car picked up its speed, wheeled around several corners in a rather risky manner, and came into Broadway, going south toward the Grand Central Station, that mighty gateway to the metropolis. Somehow, nobody seemed to have much to say—not even Bruce.

Betty was the first to break the silence.

“Don’t cry, Faith,” she said, very softly.

“I—I can’t help it,” said Faith.

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FAITH PALMER AT THE OAKS

FAITH PALMER AT FORDYCE HALL

FAITH PALMER IN WASHINGTON (In press)



















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